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THE
GOD OF SHADOWS

THE CHOSEN

BOOK ONE OF THE DARK CHRONICLES

The God of Shadows

The Chosen

Mohammed Ismail

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LIST OF CONTENTS

PRØLOGUE

CHAPTER I

CHAPTER II

CHAPTER III

CHAPTER IV

CHAPTER V

CHAPTER VI

CHAPTER VII

CHAPTER VIII

EPILOGUE

“Where there is light, there is darkness.

Where there are good there are evil.

Where there is life there is death.

Where there is soul, there is a shadow.

And where there are shadows darkness
prevails.”

PROLOGUE

THE GRASP OF DARKNESS

A lynx ran to the village from the nearby forest. He held his head with his hands running wild and crashed to the ground. Alarmed, everyone in the village dropped their work and went to check upon the lying lynx.

Poking the younger brother's shoulder, "Look something's wrong." He pointed towards the crowd. "C'mon, let's go down and see". Arkaantho's mind was struck with curiosity and fear as he said the words, it was more like saying it to himself rather than his brother. The little cub

nodded in agreement, expression similarly grim as the elder's.

Both the brothers slid down by the mountainside and upon approaching the crowd, few of the villagers shrieked and ran off from the crowd in random directions. Even they too held their head with their hands and went crashing into a wall or stumbling and crashing to the ground. When one of the villagers fell near the two brothers, they saw the most horrific sight, the cat had her head covered in black glass-like slime and it seemed to be decaying her head, revealing her flesh-less, bony upper part skull.

Even more, shouting followed from the crowd now it was all of them their sprinting only gets stopped either by crashing with other villagers infecting them or with the walls spreading the lobs of dark materials around them. Arkaantho realizing the situation, quickly grabbed his brother's hand and rushed to his house.

“Father! Something is happening! Where are you!?” Arkaantho and his brother searched the house leaving no stone unturned and found no one. Arkaantho thought that he might be in the paddy field, they rushed out of the house only to discover that all the houses were on fire and people running about screaming as

one by one were being devoured by the black slime.

Rikaantho tightened his grip on his brother's arm, "Brother I'm scared!"

"I know brother I am as well don't worry everything will be fine we will find pa and get out of here," Arkaantho crouched and said holding his cheek with his hands and locked eyes with him. "But what about Truny and her little hawk?" Rikaantho said breaking into tears. "We will look for Truny and her baby after we get pa, ok?" Rikaantho hugged him, with a broken voice, "Ok."

Arkaantho locked his grip on Rikaantho firmly and sprinted to the paddy field. His eyes widened in shock when he saw his father, a strongly built tiger, stood with a sickle on his and his adversary was a tall medium build person covered with black ebony armour. The whole field was piled with the dead bodies of other farmers and peasants. His helmet fully covered his face except for the eye part where inside seemed like blazing black smokeless fire as eyes. The upper part of the helmet had black pointy spikes faced above.

The armoured adversary had a large towering sword of black material gripped as if waiting to strike on the first moment

of engagement. Arkaantho and his brother stood several meters away from them, petrified. The red tiger gritted his teeth, as both stood still, his hands were starting to shake little by little until the sickle was swaying sidewise. It seems the intimidating aspect of the dark shape got under his skin.

Arkaantho cried out to his father, the voice was merely louder than a whisper from the fright. He quickly realized that his throat was dried up. He gulped and cried out again. This time the voice reached his father's ear causing him to turn in reflex. Before he could realize the threat before him and turn, the sword slashed cross his left arm. He yelled out in pain and dropped

to the ground. He scrambled back as the opponent approaches.

Arkaantho was shocked to see his father's severed arm landed few yards ahead of them. Rikaantho started crying and dug his face into his brother's shirt.

Their cry turned the attention of the attacker towards them, and with that window, the tiger quickly got to his feet and slashed at its neck with a cry. The sickle met the neck, but he didn't even flinch. He grabbed the sickle, broke it into two and stabbed onto the neck of the tiger with it. The tiger's mouth gasped in pain but the broken blade punctured through

his jugular veins and cross the throat. The knight grabbed the tiger by the shirt collar and threw him to the farm.

Uncontrollably, Arkaantho ran toward the wounded tiger. Rikaantho grabbed onto his shirt and followed. The blood stained the wheat plants and pooled around him. Arkaantho sat down beside his father, put his head on his lap and tried to stop the unstoppable flow of blood. The knight approached them, grabbed Rikaantho by the neck and threw the little white pup far to the edge of the jungle.

Arkaantho was staggered to the ground before he could react. The knight kept his

feet on Arkaantho head while grabbing the tiger's leg and threw it behind him. Arkaantho, witnessing such sadistic act cried out in anger and tried to pry the foot from his face with his fingers. The attacker pulled his foot and picked up the angry white pup with his hands, which cupping the whole head. Arkaantho still struggled. He freed his fingers and kicked him in mid-air.

Arkaantho crashed nearby a tree, his chest felt as if several ribs were broken. He tried to get up as blood flowed out from his mouth. He wiped his mouth off the blood, the boiling anger got the best of his disgust. He took the broken half of the sickle and

charged with all his strength. The knight dug his sword into the ground and waited for the pup to get close.

The broken blade shattered into tiny pieces momentarily it came in contact. He stood still for a moment disbelieving the strike to lay not even the tiniest of scratch.

The adversary chuckled as Arkaantho looked up to meet his fiery gaze. He grabbed the pup by the throat and picked him up until their eyes were in the same level, “Tell me pathetic being, even if there was the slightest chance for you to kill me and avenge your father, would you take it?” The voice was deep, although it was a

little louder than a whisper, Arkaantho felt his ears were about to explode.

“I will kill you!” He barely cried out as his throat was being crushed by the solid gauntlets.

“How interesting!” He pulled Arkaantho nearer to him. “A weak being such as yourself was supposed to run into the woods. Just like how every child did when I slaughtered their parents.” He bends closer, his face was less than an inch from Arkaantho’s. “Just like how the smaller pup did, who was with you.”

Arkaantho tried to pry out the fingers which were crushing him harder as every

moment passes by. “I am not someone who admires others struggle for life however it would seem, but when they see themselves near the death’s door...” He chuckles, "...Everyone turns tails and run for their 'precious' pathetic lives.” He releases his fingers around him and Arkaantho drops to the ground, gasping for breath.

“Hmm, I think it would suffice to say that, you are a brave child. But sadly, our conversation ends here,” He rose his left hand and upon opening the palm, a small black cloud appears.

“You’ve survived this long,” He looks at the cloud and then at Arkaantho, “Let’s see

how your bravado keeps you alive through this!" He aims his hand at the pup. The cloud flew to him with a ferocious speed and invaded his body through his mouth, nose, and ears.

He choked on the black material which liquefied upon contact within his body. As if it was alive, shifting out and back into the body turning his white fur into pitch black until no more black liquid was left out.

After some time, he crawled around wildly and vomited blood, which was pure black. Writhing in pain, his vision faded so did his consciousness.

CHAPTER I

DIED AS A MORTAL REBORN AS A GOD

Arkaantho has been training under the dark lord ever since after the incident at the village, Warul. When the dark lord took him in he was only several years of age. He was forced to undergo many harsh situations and made to do much harsher work, so harsh that he was kept up day and night and he forgot the importance, moreover, the meaning of sleep. Eventually, Arkaantho grew up mastering his newly gifted power on every advancing age. From the cautious, intelligent and a loving brother Arkaantho was changed

into a new being forever, except it was now he has spawned a far darker side.

The dark lord was pleased to see him succeed every challenge with ease and his extraordinary way of harnessing shadow powers.

Arkaantho stood near a pond. The young wolf was now a fully matured adult. He wore a dark crystal plated armour with a black wrapped lined skirt. He had long bracelets made of black diamond and a talisman around his neck which hung a small red rod. The way ahead lies a huge waterfall. A huge grey mountain with jagged rocks protruding from the mountain body like spikes to prevent

anything giant-like or even any sort of creature to climb over it. On the top was a crevice, large enough to pour torrents of water onto the pond every moment. The whitewater cascaded down a series of rocky outcrops, giving the effect of many waterfalls rather than just one. On the midway of the downpour was a small rainbow that seemed like the top of a colourful mushroom. Some of the stones below broke as the torrents continually fall on the rocks. Only the stronger ones stood strong, shining like glass, reflecting the rays of Sun.

Arkaantho steeped down into the pond, the cold water hugged his legs but it wasn't for him. He walked up to the base and held out

his hand into the waterfall. For a moment it seemed delightful, the water which would break down the rocks were simply being separated by his hand as soft as the still water.

He walked through the downpour of torrents which hid a cave. The mouth of the cave was immense as if a giant creature the size of half a hill took shelter in there. Looking at the ground he saw paw prints almost the size of his torso. As he entered the cave, a low snorting of whatever lived there was asleep, came from further inside.

Taking a right and another right, he stepped outside the cave. The place was beautiful, blue glowing birds chirped and

flew in the air randomly. Through the gap of the mountain rocks on the top, the ray of sunlight fell on to the small blue pond nearby revealing the fishes as they swim all around the pond and the green weeds at the bottom.

On the side was a huge rock that almost fitted a hollow on the cave wall. Arkaantho approached it and observed the way it was. It seemed like it was covering up a mouth of a cave. A leash of black shot out from his shadow which harpooned the rock and with a gesture it pried free as if was a rusted metal.

Just as he thought it was a cave but a small one. The cave was completely empty but

there were bones of many creatures and two silvery eggs the size of big apples. A low growl came from behind him and he evaded to the side as a creature tumbled and crashed onto the rock.

It was a Kretean with a head of a vicious-looking reptile, the legs of a lion and scaled body. Arkaantho stood and locked his gaze with it. They both circled for a while when the Kretean decided to leap on to the wall and shoot red beams from its eyes. Arkaantho dodged to the side. The beams disintegrated the ground forming a deep hole. Without giving him a window to strike back, the creature leaped towards him aimed with its front legs. Arkaantho gazed at it, his eyes glowed crimson and

the creature was stopped midway, totally petrified. With ease, he put up his hand, aimed it on the shadow on the ground and closed the opened palm, his fingers curling in slowly. The creature started to shrink little by little. When his hand formed into a ball of a fist, the creature was left deformed into a scaly ball, crushed by an unseen force.

He entered the small cave and took the two silvery eggs. He picked them up and with a shroud of black, which rose from his shadows, covered the eggs and went back into his shadow.

Arkaantho returned to what seemed like an out aged abandoned castle. It stood

strong in the middle surrounded by ruins and fog. Above the citadel was a huge black cloud, which seemed to be that all of the clouds of the place grouped together by some magic leaving only that place eerie and dark.

"Well done my apprentice!" The dark lord's voice boomed throughout the hall as Arkaantho knelt before him and presented him the eggs. "I have seen what you did to that Kretean. Very crafty and not messy," He steadily drew closer to him. "You are now ready."

He gestured Arkaantho to follow him to which he obeyed with a courteous nod. Both stepped outside the citadel and stood

near the gate for some time, looking at the trees and landscape.

"I... have a work for you." He turned towards Arkaantho.

"What is it that you require, master?" Arkaantho replied.

"This work... may take many years to complete, as of course, it is my last assignment to you." The dark lord said as he looked at the sky and the ground.

Arkaantho frowned, "Last assignment, master?" The dark lord's eyes gave a flash of white flame. "I want you to go to Egypt. Once you are there, make a name for yourself," He turned his gaze to the wolf, "I

hope you are familiar with the gods, how self-centered they are?"

Arkaantho bowed, "Yes my lord."

"Well then, just as I said, try to be imperious, make them see your greatness and when you are at a certain level... I will tell you what to do next," He turned his back and faced the citadel entrance.

"You can count on me, my lord." Arkaantho replied kneeling before the dark lord, bowing, "But one thing..." He looked up to the dark cloaked figure, "Why Egypt?"

The dark lord looked at him for a while, "It's because there is something there that

needs you and your power to rise from its sleep. Something that belongs to me."

Arkaantho bowed his head in agreement, "Of course, my lord if that is your wish I shall personally see it done."

"Yes, I am sure that of it. Go Arkaantho," a breath that bore a hint of a chuckle, "...God of shadows," Receiving his master's last orders, Arkaantho rippled and disappeared into the short-lived dark, thin materials.

CHAPTER II

CORRUPTING VENGEANCE

The glossy black furred wolf came up to an old bridge. The days were never better for it. The ropes were worn grey, the wooden planks half rotten, but for Arkaantho he has no need to cross it but only blink to the other side.

Walking down the cliff, he took a boat and rowed on, leaving the island behind him. As he landed on a shore, seagulls flying, the wind blowing, the sand under his feet felt very new to him.

Several yards away from his right, a man with a spear and a strange glowing cube

laid on the shoreline half-eaten. It wasn't clear what attacked him but the flesh on his body seemed to have gone black probably with age. Arkaantho walked up to the corpse and yanked the glowing cube off from the tightly gripped hand. The cube gave an ominous yellow glow. For a moment he observed its radiant light before it diminished transforming into nothing more than a grey cube. He took it shadows which wrapped around it and dissipated.

It was almost dusk. He looked behind him, the island from which he rowed from was barely visible in the horizon. He walked over the small plateau and spotted a small

village nearby. Arkaantho spent the beginning of his life in the citadel and in the island with the dark lord. He doesn't know how people are and what does culture and social mean. Hunting monsters and being treated harshly by the dark lord got him rid of his emotions and feelings. He only explored whatever was on the island but never saw anything like this. It was time to put his intelligent to work and explore and learn whatever he could before entering Egypt. Starting with this village.

He noticed several brown burned patches on the land, which seemed as if a great fire

devoured whatever was there and left these signs for whatever it meant to the habitats that lived here.

On the horizon ahead, he could see the red Sun slowly sinking in the forest canopy. The clouds were painted orange, and birds flew to their nest as the dark slowly descended.

The village was encircled with huge thick wooden pillars held by thick promising threads. The people could be seen lighting up fires on a decoratively small wood stands inside and outsides the entrance. The boisterous children ran in circles around the huge fireplace in the middle

along with several people clapping as they did so.

As Arkaantho made his way to the entrance, the dried-up grass, leaves, and twigs crunched under his feet. He stood near the entrance for a while watching the fires blazing as few moths hovered around it and the way weeds grew up the pillars, hugging it in spiral-like motion. No one was near the entrance and it seemed all the sounds reached his perked ears from the center of the village.

He stepped in, the floor was absent of the dried grass and leaves but was covered with the fresh green ones. Their abodes were more oval-shaped houses made of

woven reeds and surprisingly, all were vacant. There must be something happening in the center of the village. So, Arkaantho decided to have a look.

Making his way through a few houses, a clear path laid between him and the huge fireplace, where now almost all of the people of the village were running and jumping around it in circles singing a song in a tongue which Arkaantho cannot comprehend.

As he slowly walked towards them, watching their movements, one of the people wearing a red loincloth with a necklace and wristbands fashioned with

canine teeth and wore a crown made of a rhino's head, spotted him.

He was one of the furless beings known as humans, where Arkaantho read in the scroll, 'lore of the mortal beings' in the library of the dark lord. They are supposed to be intelligent and aggressive towards other creatures except themselves, full of envy, hate and unnecessary emotions, very ethical when it comes to killing. They always have the tendency to betray one another for their personal gain and beliefs even among family members. But when a powerful among them rises up, they start worshipping it not out of love or respect but out of fear. Only one of the thousands

are loyal and respectful. Also, most of them are very skeptical as well.

As he was passing through the village, in an instant, everyone stopped their activities and stared at the black towering wolf. The man dressed in mostly teeth said something in another tongue which made Arkaantho tilt his head in question.

He kept speaking in a different dialect. Arkaantho frowned, possibly he might be asking him something. Finally, after a moment of contemplation, his dialect was understandable by the puzzled wolf “Who are you? Do you understand me?”

The man spoke with difficulty. Arkaantho recognized the primitive language. He

decided not to reply at first but again he thought if he didn't speak he might keep change into another language. "I can understand you," Arkaantho replied and the people gasped in shock.

The man gasped, "Oh! I never thought you spoke the easiest tongue"

A smile broke on his face, "Who are you, my friend?"

Arkaantho frowned as to how fast he considered him someone friendly. "Who I am is not of your concern."

The man bowed, "I am Woosula, the chief of my people." He smiled and held out his hands.

Arkaantho's gaze darted from the man's visage and the hands.

"Can I please have a close look at you? Of course, if you don't mind." He frowned as started observing the moment he said.

"Why? What's wrong?" Arkaantho said as he bent back as the chief leans forward.

"By the Ancients! He has come!" The chief's voice suddenly heightened as he threw his hands up in the air.

The other villagers cheered in a surprising symphony.

Arkaantho's eyes shot up wide. "What are you screaming about?"

"You!" The chief replied. Then as he held out a hand the villagers silenced altogether in an incredible synchronization.

"Our guardian, Verdou!" He yelled then all of them prostrated before him.

Arkaantho was baffled. He stared at the people and couldn't comprehend what were they doing.

The chief was the first to stand up, "Come, come," He gestured Arkaantho, "Today is a very special day. It is the day of celebration and the day when the gods offer us the gift!"

Arkaantho followed slowly. The people around him were smiling and some are waving as if they knew he would come to

their village. The chief led him into the circle and all of them sat beside the fireplace.

“Tell me, where do you come from?” The chief asked with a surprisingly friendly tone.

“I do not know, I woke up on the shore behind the hill.” Arkaantho lied to prevent them to gain the knowledge from traveling from the black island.

“I see.” The chief thought looking at the fire. “It is exactly as it was written!”

“...Written?” Arkaantho said with trepidation.

The chief hastily stood up and held his hands towards the sky. “Praise be the gods,

for they brought us our savior" All the people around followed the lead and shouted something in a foreign dialect. Arkaantho's brow shot up.

The chief looked at him then his eyes shot at the few boys who were standing outside the circle. "What are you imbeciles standing around for? Our savior is thirsty!" "Why do you keep calling me savior?" Arkaantho asked slightly annoyed at their behavior.

The boys quickly carried two pitchers and the chief sat beside Arkaantho pouring two cups of sizzling aromatic liquid.

"There was a prophecy, one that my grandmother foretold. That one day in the

day of gods' ascension would come a being from the outside world who would liberate us from the dark creature's rampages."

Arkaantho looked at him and noticed that he was serious. "God's ascension?"

"It is written that today is the day when the ancient eternal beings are to ascend to the level of the highest of creation," The chief looked at the stars and nodded.

"What is this dark creature?" Arkaantho broke off the chief from stargazing.

"The dark creature? That abomination of creation, mistake of the gods. Once it awakens from its slumber, it only keeps destroying and destroying until there are none left to destroy." The chief's head

lowered, "So many islands like this were destroyed by it. A being that raises flame, pure red flam that turns ashes into anything it touches. We don't know its name but we call it the Magnandu, means the devastator." The chief replied. Arkaantho notice a slight breaking of his voice when he said the name.

"Many of the neighboring villages have also witnessed this fate. It used to occur at a very later time, its destruction. But now, suddenly it has become very erratic." He continued, speaking with difficulty as he speaks further gesturing his hands by drawing round circles depicting the villages and running his hand over them.

“Pity those souls. Most of them thought they would love to see you arrive and deliver us from this inhumane destruction and send us to everlasting joy and peace.”

He sighed and looked at the people around, who watches him, boring their lifeless expressions. The chief smiles, “But no worries, right? We have you! And now, we will celebrate!” The crowd cries out as the chief hold the cup high in the air spilling some of the liquid.

Arkaantho sat there, while everyone celebrates the night, thinking about what the chief said earlier. The thought of god's ascension bothered him more than the approaching threat. After when everyone

was tired, Arkaantho asked the chief hoping to get more information about it, but he was too much drunk to even open his mouth without puking the liquid.

Dawn broke, as everyone was under the slumber in their oval-shaped houses. Arkaantho broke his meditation and stood up looking up at the blue sky that slowly turned yellow and the calm breeze shifted from the shores to the village and how the trees and the tall grass danced with them. From somewhere behind him he heard a whisper.

“Psst, over here!” Arkaantho turned around and saw a boy which seemed exactly like

the chief with the red loincloth, only had a necklace hanging a single long canine.

“You’re the savior, the Verdou!”

Arkaantho’s brow shot up at their ridiculous sense of changing his name repeatedly. “Just call me Arkaantho, not savior or whatever you think you should call me.” The boy held up his hand in apology. “Alright, listen, would you follow me, I have something to show you. It’s very important.” Surprisingly he uttered the words with fluency, unlike the chief.

Intrigued, Arkaantho agreed.

They walked through the bushes. He introduces himself to Arkaantho and told him he was the firstborn of the clan

Meerlou and “soon to be the chief”. Arkaantho also got know about what it meant to have teeth hanging around their necks, it was the teeth of their kills and he had the canine of a saber.

Soon, they stood near a statue of what seemed like a man, dressed in robes and held up a staff, and held a giant book on the other hand. It depicted the man to very old with a headdress from which two horns protrude from sides.

“Time has never been friendly towards this statue, but who you see here said to be the first of the creations.” The boy said as he wiped the dirt from the stone body.

“First?” Arkaantho asked.

“Yes, legends say that it was him who liberated this world from age of white cold oblivion.” He turned surprised that he never heard of him.

“White, cold, age... You mean when everything was covered in ice?” Arkaantho said.

“Yes, I heard many people say it, people

like you.” He gestured to him as he replied.

Arkaantho understood what he meant,

“You mean there were others, who looked

like me passed through your village?”

“Exactly, but don’t ask me of them for I

don’t know who they were and where they

went as they never spoke, to us nor to each

other,” The boy said, picking up a nut and

eating it. “Enough talk about the statue, he is a legend and sometime legends are not always true. Follow me.”

The boy did not stand for Arkaantho to agree and started striding forward. Before he started walking Arkaantho looked at the hands of the statue and all the ten fingers had huge round rings on them.

After a minute of walking, they stopped near a cave.

“Here’s what we’re going to do.” The boy said his voice much less than a whisper. “There is a monster in that cave, said to the strongest of them which even my ancestors couldn’t kill and died trying.” He pointed at the bones and skulls near the entrance.

“Its teeth and fur are very valuable and I want you to help me kill it.”

“Why do you want to kill it, doesn’t seem it causes much trouble,” Arkaantho said.

“Well... It killed my ancestors and I wish to avenge them.” The boy said looking at the decayed remains.

“Why didn’t your father tried to kill it?” Arkaantho asked and notice the boy was starting to feel irritated.

“It’s because he is too afraid of it and no one can kill it alone. He is afraid that if he cannot kill it alone he would lose his life and if he kills it with the help of the other’s then there is no honor for bearing the teeth

of the monster.” The boy quickly squinted his jaw gritted at the last words.

Arkaantho completely understood his intentions, “So you wish to kill it so that you can have its canine around your neck.”

The boy did not reply.

“Well, in that case, why don’t you go and kill it?” Arkaantho asked.

“I can’t ok!” The boy snapped. His words pierced through the air loud enough to hear from a mile away. He instantly clasped his mouth. A roar came from inside the dark cave.

“Run”, the boy said screaming as he turned and ran wildly through the bushes.

Arkaantho stood for a split second for to

see the creature when it emerged out of the cave.

A dark brown furred, combined species of a tiger and a lion lunged out and Arkaantho followed the boy's lead. He caught up with him, the boy screamed at him to do something or it will be the end for both of them, or so he thought.

"You did this, now you are not going to have the honor of killing it yourself since I'm about intervene," Arkaantho said.

The boy frowned, "Look you are the savior, not like one of my people, so if you help me kill it, I'd still have the honor and we won't die. C'mon you must have something special power with you!"

Arkaantho didn't reply.

"Please, please just help me kill it! I... I'd do whatever you say. Please!" The boy kept crying.

Arkaantho sighed, "Alright, follow me."

They both climbed up a small hill, and Arkaantho grabbed a big rock and threw it at the creature. It crashed onto its head stopping it in its tracks, staggering it for a moment. "Now, go and kill it!" He yelled at the whimpering boy.

With a cry, the boy pulled out his knife and a wooden spear and lunged at the creature. Arkaantho frowned at the way the boy tried to kill it. The monster quickly regains its senses and sept the boy in mid-air with

its immense paw. It looked at Arkaantho for some time, as it sniffed the air then ignoring him, it moved to its prey who lied there motionless.

Arkaantho heard screams from the bushes and crowd emerged along with the chief. They were too far away and the creature doesn't seem to be bothered at all. It widened its jaws, even the boy's body seemed pitifully smaller than its mouth armed with razor-sharp swords as teeth. Arkaantho waited for the boy to gain conscious and strike but time was running out. He notices the chief looking at him and the boy with his jaw hanging. After giving the boy much time. Arkaantho held

up his hand and held the beast up in the air.

The beast struggled to return to the ground, Arkaantho's eyes glowed red as he looked at its shadow and slowly putting up his other hand up as if he was holding the back side and the head of the beast. Then after a moment, he moved his hands to either side. The beat was ripped into two, its blood fell on to the boy making him shower with its blood.

All the people gave out wide stare at him and the dead beast. Then, all of them cheered up shouting Verdou.

All of them rushed uphill and tried to pull him up by clutching his thigs and failed.

The chief pulled up the boy covered with red blood and yellow fluid. After their shouting of joy, everyone gathered around him and bowed meeting their heads to the ground. Arkaantho was surprised by the way they treated him, except the boy, who was enraged at him for taking his kill and ran into the woods.

A grand feast was held up that night, a huge flat wooden plank was set up on the ground and people flooded it with cooked meat of all sorts of beasts, decorating those with flowers and nuts. Huge pitchers were also put beside the plank containing water and other liquid which made Arkaantho frown at the smell.

They made Arkaantho sat at the end of the plank table and all stood around him like they always do, in circles. Arkaantho was confused what had to be done so he looked at the chief.

He replied with a smile, “You saved my son and proved that you are the Verdou, our savior. So, you will get to eat first and after you are done then we will eat the rest.”

Arkaantho’s brow shot up, “What happens if you eat with me?” The chief chuckled, then we will offend you by considering you as our equal, which you are not.”

Arkaantho didn’t ask anything more and started with the huge, brown, round one with two bones sticking out at one end and

two small hands, or so it seemed, from the sides. After he finished he stood up, gesturing them to help themselves. They looked at him with their brows shot up, then with a smile and cheering they all sat down to eat.

The chief walked toward him and with his permission, he put a red thread necklace around his neck which bore the canine of the beast he killed.

With only a smile he joined the others, only there someone absent amongst them, the boy.

Arkaantho left the oblivious people to their feast and set out into the woods. He searched the forest, sniffing the air for his

scent and looking out for any torch. He had a tingling sensation that the boy was up to no good, the way he looked at him with a malicious gaze, his disappearance could only mean that he was preparing for revenge.

Arkaantho gave up searching him, on foot. Instead, he closed his eyes and breathed. The only thing in his mind was, wherever he could be, he must produce a shadow which would give out his location. He sensed something on his right, through the way where the statue was, he could feel the boys shadow, faint but enough for him to find.

He reached the statue, as silently as the night, he went further up ahead. He could hear the boy's faint whisper starting to get clearer as he got closer. After a moment of walking, he saw a faint light and the boy standing in front of a tall black rock. A picture was painted from bottom to top. It was a vague picture of a being; the whole picture was red with four hands and two heads. The heads seemed somewhat like a man but something else, which Arkaantho didn't recognize. Teeth were protruding from its mouth and had black longs horns. As Arkaantho observed the picture, the boy's murmuring stopped and turned around.

“So, tell me Verdou, does this always have to happen to me?” The boy spoke as he knew Arkaantho was there.

“What are you talking about?” Arkaantho’s eyes narrowed.

The boy sighed and looked at the rock. “It’s so pitiful that all of you have to suffer such horrible fate.” He turned to Arkaantho with a malicious grin. “All those villages, and now my home as well.”

Arkaantho looked at him, “You’re saying whatever happened to those villages was you and now you are going to destroy this village as well like the rest?”

He chuckled, “Very clever. No doubt you’re the savior.”

“The first village, to the north was a very peaceful and spirited one. One day my parents and I visited the place. Full of life, that place was, never known fear,” He started pacing, “But they did only one thing wrong, a man was attracted to my mother, even though he knew it was a taboo for other clan to fall in love towards one belonging to another clan. My father intervened, he beat him to the ground and reminded him the law. My father was strong but that man was someone who stabs people from the back instead of the front. That night when we were all sleeping, he crept up into our house and murder my mother.”

He looked at the torch that was hung on the stone, his eyes watered as if he saw the whole thing again. “So, I ran, not to my father, but here. And I prayed to Him,” He gestured to the rock. “The mighty being of true justice accepted my prayer and laid waste to the village that man loved. Including everyone just leveled to the ground!” His dark expression turned into a sinister laughter.

“And for the other three villages, one because I save a chief’s daughter from a silver-maned saber.” He pointed at the canine that hung from his neck. “The chief did not let me marry that woman.” He scoffed. “The other one, was because of my

own reason, didn't like the people. So..." He ran his hand with fingers straightened, in a horizontal motion, "Flattened."

"The next one, the dead chief's son was so obsessed with his father's throne, he betrayed me on a personal matter which you don't have to know." He stopped walking and stood before the statue, finally facing Arkaantho.

"Now the last, which you know but let me make it clear once again. I asked someone very famous to help me to go beyond the rule, only once!" He held up a finger near his face. "But, he was too selfish and betrayed me, taking the honor for himself

and leaving me, a waste of life!" His words transformed into yelling.

The ground was starting to tremble, small pebbles bounced on the ground and trees got uprooted and fell. The whole island appears to be having a strong earthquake. In the distance, high tides flowed and crushed against the island shore. "Now, here is my salvation." He spreads his hands to either side as he chants something in a foreign dialect.

"You know what?" Arkaantho asked.

"What!?" The boy cried back.

"You're a very interesting child."

Arkaantho chucked his eyes glowed

ominously, and the chuckle evolved into laughter.

The boy shot up an eyebrow out of confusion. His reply stuck him petrified.

"Oh you humans, so pathetic." He covered his face with his palm.

"Wha—" The boy stood by as Arkaantho's expression settles.

"Thank you for wasting my time." With that said, Arkaantho grabbed the boy's head and smacked it on the rock. Blood wetted his hands, "All of this Verdou and crap, for what? Only for your pathetic pain?!" The boy struggled to free himself from his hand, which held him like a bear trap, his skull being crushed as the long

black fingers squeeze it harder with each passing moment. “All of this stupid drama. I knew I shouldn't have wasted my time here. But I think, for that, your life will be a price if not enough.”

He hardens his grip and the skull starts making loud cracking sounds. “You pathetic primitives truly don't deserve to live,” He pulled his head and smacked it on the rock again. With a loud thud, the head broke into pieces only were held together by the skin.

From the shore on the side, a large figure emerges from the sea. It has two large heads with one eye on each. It walked up

to the shore and started shooting large red rays of beams in his direction.

He dropped the dead boy and looked at the giant creature, it was a hybrid cyclops.

Arkaantho evaded the rays and reached the village momentarily. The chief and others were evacuating the people from the village. "You can't stop it alone!"

Arkaantho walked to the chief. He looked at Arkaantho, his eyes filled with terror. "Verdou! Where is my son? Everyone is here but..."

"Your son was killed by his own delusion of destroying you," He grabbed the chief's shoulder. "Go before you all perish here like the rest!" For a moment, he looked at

Arkaantho, He could not believe what he said, "No, you need my help!" The chief said refusing to go. "When we get through this, we will talk about him."

The cyclops headed towards the village. It was unusual for it had four arms and two heads each with big round red eyes covering the forehead completely.

Except for Arkaantho and the chief, none remained in the vicinity. The cyclops walked over the plateau as if walking over a step. The chief started chanting with his eyes closed. The cyclops spotted them, its eyes glowed and pink rays formed around the eyes as it charged. Few men rushed from behind stood beside him and joined

on the chanting. It would only take a second for the cyclops to fire. Before it could Arkaantho aimed his hand at its legs and swept it off the ground. It fell with an earth-shattering thud and the beams were directed to the sky.

The chief and the other's finished their chanting. A yellow aura formed around them, their pupils sunk and in a synchronized tone, they uttered something in their tongue, aiming their hands at the cyclops. A flash of yellow dashed beside Arkaantho and formed a huge spiky chain around it. The more it struggled to get free, the chain shrinks, its immense spikes made its way into the cyclops's flesh.

With a roar, it broke the chain into pieces. The chief and the other's fell exhausted, blood dripped from their mouth. It seemed that they used a spell which was beyond their limit. Arkaantho looked at the cyclops. Its body painted red and black dots covered it like spots. The cyclops stomped the earth with its foot sending waves around it and kept roaring.

As the cyclops, yet again ready's its double-headed beam Arkaantho gazed at it, his pupils glowed red, brighter. He held out his hand and grabbed at the air. The cyclops's head tilted back. With his other hand, he grabbed the other head. He grabbed the heads of the larger shadow

rotated the heads in a way so that he eyes meet one another. Panicked, the cyclops writhed as if he could not control the heads and the eyes which were about to shoot the devastating beams. With intensified effort, he moved his hands closer together slowly until the eyes were joined and strengthened his grip. With a loud sharp sound, the eyes shot the beams and the heads blasted into bits, the pink blood vaporized in the air by the heat. The body falls onto the village. Everything under it, houses, and trees were demolished under its weight. With a final earthquake, the cyclops was no more.

Arkaantho's eyes glowed almost as bright as the cyclops's did. The blood washed over him and the shamans like rain. He approached them and checked whether they were alive or not. Amongst them, the chief gave a nod with a smile.

Everyone ran out from the woods cheering Verdou. The shamans took the unconscious group to their tent's which survived. The people gathered around him, and bowed, thrice. "You are the herald of the God, a true one!" One of them cried out. "O mighty one, please, whenever you need us do not think us useless and call upon us. Even in death, we shall serve you!"

Arkaantho stared at them blankly and gave a nod. He accepted their proposal and wished to stay with them until the chief recovers.

The people made a special tent for him, from the skin of the beast he slew, yew wood stands and the interior was filled with lavenders and pitchers of honey with deliciously cooked cyclops meat.

The next morning Arkaantho visited the chief and told him everything about his son. The chief sobbed in grief and covered his face with his hands as the tears rolled on his hands. “Verdou,” His voice was weak and broken, “Thank you for everything.”

The chief did not say anything more as he laid on the bed continuously sobbing.

As Arkaantho set out to leave, the villagers and the children wept and offered him some foods and jewelry which he refused and told them that they needed it more than him. Without resistance, they obeyed.

But still wept continuously as he disappeared into the jungle.

CHAPTER III

THE TWINS

After walking for almost a league through the burnt landscape, devastated villages and crossing a huge river, Arkaantho was miles away from a valley.

The landscape was huge and looked lustrous as on the cloudless sky, the sun was at its peak. Green grass filled the space between the green serene mountains ahead and the wilderness behind. Along the tall green grass were clusters of red-white flowers. Those were the Cymbria. It was the most scented flowers in the world.

One curious sniff from one of them could create an urge for any weak-minded creature to stay there forever and keep indulging itself in its sweet smell for the rest of its lives.

As Arkaantho walked towards the far away valley a skull crushed under his foot. Seemed one of the creatures fell for such sweet illusion and was made an example.

The green hills ahead seemed small from far but tremendous up close. The valley was between the V-shaped hills, where a river ran through it.

Three huge mountains, behind the valley, blocked the horizon. Unlike the hills, the mountain tops were covered in a blanket

of snow. Downwards were only patches of black on brown.

The population of pine trees increased as he walked closer to the valley. A population came into view. Just downhill, behind the V-shape a people in a place between a town and village. A river ran through as if separating the whole valley into two, only a stone bridge was in between. The lower developed houses were on the left and the better ones were on the right.

On the left seemed like slums, but the brown huts and hovels seemed much neater and tidier than the opposite side. The only difference between the people on

either side was that those belonging on the left wore robes which covered their aspects fully. Arkaantho doubts those in robes to be human or other races, as because the humans on the right seemed more emancipated than them. Without thinking twice, Arkaantho walked down the left side.

The ground was muddy and small puddles were here and there. The robed people seemed to be ignoring the black feline as he walked through the entrance. Someone stood before him, preventing Arkaantho to go further. “Hold it there, friend.” His voice was dry and rough. “Quick question, are you from around here?”

Arkaantho looked at him, “What’s the problem if I’m not?” Arkaantho asked back. The man chuckled. He opened his hood, revealing a black with white striped lynx. “Well just wanted to make sure you ain’t-a fake wolf!”

“Name’s Struff rhymes with stuff.” He held out his hand. Arkaantho gave him a cold stare.

“Ok, threatening attitude and unfriendly gaze would send to right to the gibbet before you can ‘swish’. And if that doesn’t work, then the people will have a playful entertainment targeting you tail, ears and your eyes.” He put his hood on. “If you

don't want it to happen; follow me, a' right?"

Without a word and immense reluctance, Arkaantho agreed, as Struff led him into a ghastly looking shack.

"Sis! Where are you?!" Struff shouted as he kicked the door and strode inside where Arkaantho waited outside. "Crazy are ya? Get inside 'fore anyone sees ya!" He gestured him inside as he spat the words than saying it. With a low growl, Arkaantho walked in.

Deceptively the interior seems much better inside, with a woolen carpet on the floor with a roundtable circled by four wooden chairs. "Make yourself at home." He pulled

out the robe and hung it on a wooden stand. Revealing a green shirt and brown breeches.

Arkaantho stood inside the house. A sound of the door shut came from ahead and Struff walked to him with a plate of biscuits and a glass of water. “Sorry guest, the elegant food is just not on the menu today, why don't you take a seat, eh?” He said as he pulled a chair and sat down. “Why do you dress in robes outside?” Arkaantho asked as he looked at the interiors.

Struff scoffed, “Long story guest. Just playing an act towards the people on the other side.”

“An act?” Arkaantho asked.

“Guest, if I knew everything then I wouldn’t be here now,” He sat back as he bit a biscuit, producing a crunching noise as he chewed.

“Would you stop with the guest?”

Arkaantho gave him an exasperated gaze.

He put his hands on the table and leaned forward, “Well, I haven’t quite caught your name, mister...”

“Arkaantho,” He replied, narrowing his eyes.

Struff frowned, “What kind of name is that?”

“The kind you do not wish to know,” He replied.

With thuds of footsteps, a female lynx walked in fur stripped red with white, wearing a blue dress as she hung her robe on the stand on top of Struff's.

His whiskers slanted as smacked his lips together. “Don’t I always tell you not to put your robes over mine? What if I accidentally wear yours and walk out. I’ll be a laughing stock,” He got up and put it on another column.

She stared at Arkaantho with widened eyes. “Mafi, meet Arkaantho, Arkaantho meet Mafi,” Stuff said with a grin as he stood before the stand, taking off her robe and throwing it on the ground.

Her gaze broke as Struff pushed her towards Arkaantho. “Don’t be afraid of him, just give a look and work your magic.”

She started trembling as Arkaantho looked at her. Noticing it, he turned to Struff. “What will she do?”

Suddenly she gasped and ran to the back door. Struff traced here as his eyebrow shot up. “Oh, she is going to make you a new robe.”

After a while, Arkaantho walked out of the shack with a fine black silk robe and a hood which covered him entirely.

“Ok see you later. Hope you liked our free offer!” He waved at Arkaantho. He turned,

his voice involuntarily dry and rough,
“Appreciated it.”

Since, the people on the left were just poor people with a fatal disease, known as gurch which is contagious to sight only, which barely made sense to Arkaantho but to go through this valley he must go with the flow as the exit is on the other side.

The evening was drawing near and Arkaantho strode to the bridge to give a look at the humans.

An elderly guard sat on a chair near the other end of the bridge, snorting softly. Arkaantho walked past him unnoticed and looked around to start by. A tavern, ‘Proud Ale’ caught his sight just several steps

away. On his way, a guard with a leather helmet and light armour armed with a spear ran into him from the side. Arkaantho staggered a step back.

“Who the heck are you, ugly?” The guard asked.

Arkaantho turned towards him slowly. “I am the guard’s brother.”

The guard chuckled, “Oh, you that bastard idiot who ran away with his wife?!”

Arkaantho growled by his reply under his robe.

“You’re sneaking around in here while he’s sleepin eh?” He laughed. “Go on, drink the whole brewery dry if ya can!” The guard

gave a hard slap on his back, turned and walked away, laughing.

Arkaantho should leave the valley but since the guard recommended the tavern and out of curiosity he pushed the door and walked inside.

Momentarily a cheering laugh house became silent as a haunted one. He looked around, most of them are frivolous men and women except the man at the bartender's table, with two swords hanging from his back, wearing black leather armour whole ignored the atmosphere and kept on drinking.

“Not there!” The woman from behind the bartender’s table called at him as he pulled a chair on the isolated table.

“The disease table is on your far left!” Arkaantho walked to the table and sat on a chair without removing the armed man from sight.

“Anything you wanna drink?” She asked.

“Just ale”, he said.

She frowned at him, “Just ale? You sure mister?”

Arkaantho nodded, a man with a rugged apron placed the jar on the table. It was a brownish liquid with white foam fizzing on the top.

A man on his neighboring table sneezed, as the crowd ignored Arkaantho and the place filled up with laughter again. He had this urge to see what the human food tasted like. It seemed stale and pungent and decided not to. The man sneezed again, “Whoa it’s like I’m stuffed with dog's furs on me.” The man rubbed his nose.

Arkaantho quickly sucks down all his curiosity and urges since it was the cue for Arkaantho to leave. He got up from his table. The man sneezed again. “Hey, you haven’t finished nor paid for the ale!” The woman called out.

The man turned and looked at him. “I haven’t drunk the ale, you can have it back,” Arkaantho replied.

“Sorry mister, those rules aren’t for you the diseased bunch, either pay or something else!” The woman yelled. The man tossed two silver coins on the table. “It’s on me.”

He walked up to Arkaantho sniffing the air. “You are strange...” He grabbed the hood and pulled it off. Everyone except him covered their eyes with their hands.

“Hmp, so much for werewolves and disease people!” He yelled as he looked eye-to-eye. Everyone uncovered their eyes and gasped. “I knew it! You’re one of the lycan leaders!” He said without batting an

eyelash. Arkaantho kept his gaze fixed onto him. One of the men yelled out, “They are all the man-beasts who kills us every week! Seems someone misses his appetite and decided to eat us!” Everyone stood up arming themselves.

Arkaantho remained silent, the man backed up a little and threw a kick at him. Before he could have straightened his leg, he was paralyzed on the spot. He grunted and tried to reach for the swords behind him and failed, his body won’t budge. The people, noticing his distress charged with a cry. With a blow with his hand, everyone was thrown back to the wall, with loud thuds.

“I am not what you think I am,” Arkaantho whispered to the man. He gritted his teeth and his eyes widened to see an eerie red glow from the wolf’s eyes. He looked down, as Arkaantho made him, and saw that his shadow was holding himself. The shadow was not frozen but as if have a life of its own holding him like how a guard would a prisoner. His eyebrows shot up at the sight.

Five guards barged in, gasped as he looked at Arkaantho and the others were beaten to sleep. He pointed a spear at him and the other’s surrounded him with swords held out. Arkaantho thought that it would be unwise to fight them in their territory,

there were a lot of them since the whole valley's soldiers were chocking in from the doorway. "Look dog, surrender quietly and everything will go smooth."

The man's speech made Arkaantho reach his peak of rage, his eyes glowed brighter as the guard's shadow rose from the ground, horrifying them in place and started stabbing them. Arkaantho grabbed the man by the throat, his fingers digging in like daggers. "This is your fault!" As he squeezed his fingers around it, the throat burst out sending the lifeless head flying. Leaving a pile of dead bodies behind, he walked out of the tavern to see more platoons pouring on the way only to be

stopped by the shrill sound of a large bell. At first, everyone ignored it. A second one was heard, the guards and everyone around looked towards the source. A third one, everyone started scurrying around to their homes. The guards recovered from their petrified state move toward Arkaantho. Then, a fourth one. The whole place was silent instantly, the guards looked frightened, “The fourth bell?” His voice sounded almost broken. A deep howl came from the distance. “Everyone! Get rid of the man-beast!” The guard cried out and charged with the spear towards Arkaantho. He kicked the spear side and landed an axe kick on his neck breaking it

with a crack. The rest followed when suddenly a group of large black wolves came dashing between him and the guards on running two legs and slitting throats with the hands. Arkaantho dodged back, breaking the thread around his wrist and undoing the robes, he grabbed one by the throat and smacked it on the ground, creating a wide hole.

Five lunged at him from the front, their long nails trailing with the blood. Before he could react, a cloud of spears flew over his head from behind, impaling all of them. Turning behind he saw a man hovering above the ground in purple armour on a white robe protecting the rest

of the villagers, by surrounding themselves with swords and spears. He gestured his hands towards the wolves and swords and spears flew towards them, as if he were controlling them.

He felt a sudden heaviness in his mind, grunting in pain he clutches his head. “You are innocent. I knew from the moment you stepped inside this valley.” A woman’s voice but no one was around except severed guards and impaled wolves. “Help us to save the people from this peril. I know you are not a bad person.”

The heaviness shifted, he looked around and saw a woman in light purple armour who looked at him with hope. He turned

and saw that the left side was almost overrun. The werewolves were slaying every living being in the valley. He blinked to the other side and fought where the duo protected the right.

He grabbed a sword and slashed through a wolf's head and manipulating their shadows to immobilize them as he beheaded them one by one.

As the last wolf was slain, the village was quiet once more. Both the sides suffered severe casualties.

Arkaantho found the woman who invaded his mind and blinked to the other side.

The man, who was hovering in the air, pointed his floating swords at Arkaantho

when he saw him appear in a black flash of dark that dissipated momentarily. As the woman, with brown hair and pale complexion approached him, he lowered his swords and landed. The woman wore a dark green gown fastened with black belts at waist and on the wrist, with a brown leather jacket. She had a silver necklace with a hung a crescent of the moon that hung around her neck. The man wore a long black leather coat with a hood partially covering his face. Both seemed much similar according to their facial features.

She stood near him and raised her hand. Arkaantho stood motionless as she softly

touched his check. His brows furrowed, “Don’t worry, I know who you are.” Her voice seemed spoken but her mouth didn’t move. Suddenly he felt a wave of calmness wash his mind and body. He grabbed her hand and pushed it away. “Who are you?” “I am Nargyn and this is my brother, Norgark.” She smiled as she gestured towards the man, “People call us the twins.”

CHAPTER IV

MYSΤERIΟUS CΩNCΕΡΝ

Arkaantho decided to stay there no longer. He gave a final glance at the place and was about to walk away when she grabbed his hand. “Please, if you wish to go out alone in the dark, don’t!”

He shook her hand off, “I can take on anything that comes at me.”

He walked on, “At least help us rebuild the village.” She said. He stood for some time. The moaning of the nearly-dead villagers and the cries of the children made him reconsider his decisions.

He gave a nod. Nargyn smiled and the two busied themselves burying the dead and helping the wounded, while she invaded the minds of the panicked ones clearing the horrific memory and calming them.

Dawn broke, the tired twins walked unto a small mansion and sat on the stairway while Arkaantho finished moving all the living ones, beast and man on the right and transforming the left side into a graveyard.

“I... never knew you are such powerful,” Struff said as he walked up behind him. Arkaantho turned and saw the lynx lost his left arm and right eye, blood dripped from the wounds through the bandages.

He sobbed, “I lost my sister. You might happen to know which ones her grave so that I could at least put it there.” He opened his palm, a smooth wooden necklace with a bronze pendant joined with and skillfully crafted wooden chain. “Today is her birthday!” His voice broke, words were coming out of his mouth as if he was forcing to speak. “This... She was... I was supposed to present it to her today,” uncontrollable stream of tears rolled down his face.

“I will show it to you, follow me.” Arkaantho said and the lynx followed, his head held low covered with his hand.

The lynx knelt in front of her grave wailing as soon as Arkaantho motioned it to him. Tears showered the ground even when he covered his face to stop it. Arkaantho stood behind, he wondered about his overwhelming grief toward his sibling and the connection between them. Struff place the necklace on the pile of soil. He stood up and walked away, sniffing. Arkaantho stood there for some time, he has never seen such deep sympathy, especially between siblings.

Before he exits the village through the mountains, an elderly person ran to him. “I have always known that your kind was full of menace and always looked towards

the loss and ill fate of humankind. Today I have been wronged." His head laid low. "Please accept my apologies for the way we treated you. On everyone's behalf, I beg you, forgive us." He put his hand together with fingers straightened, lowering his head

Arkaantho held up his hand in acceptance, "It's alright, you don't have to go that far," The man's sorrow face broke into a wide smile, he grabbed his hand, "How can I-- we ever repay you?"

"You don't have to", Arkaantho pulled his hand from his grasp and walked past him towards the broken gate.

“We are coming with you!” Nargyn spoke in his mind. He turned to see the twins striding to catch up. “I have no need for your company.”

“But we do!” She said. “Wherever you go we will follow, it’s the least we could do.”

“But that village is your home,” Arkaantho said.

“We don’t have a home”, she replied.
“Besides we didn’t know what to do when first came here since we were teenagers.
Now we do.”

“My business is not yours to be concerned.”
He turned and continued walking through the grassy plain.

“Please accept us, like I said it’s the least we can do!” She yelled.

Arkaantho sighed, “What is it with you?”

“Forget it Nargyn, he is not what you think he is,” Norgark said.

“I know what he is!” She retorted with an enraged glare that made Norgark look away momentarily.

“Fine, come. But be warned if you drag me into any unwanted trouble, you both will be accounted for.” Arkaantho started walking ahead.

She calmed, her frown disappeared. “Ok. Lead the way.”

From a wilderness to a plain of green and to another wilderness, they walked on into

the jungle. The twins hesitated at first to go into the jungle being afraid of the unknown dangers that lurked within. “I don’t have all day, either follow me or follow your nose,” Arkaantho said as he vaults over a bush and walked into the forest, the two did the same sparing their second thoughts.

“Ugh, stupid mosquitoes are just charging into my ear and nose!” Norgark complained as they wandered deep into the jungle, Nargyn giggled. “Could you please get rid of the mosquitoes? I’m dying out here.” Nargyn looked at him and the mosquitoes around him disappeared.

“Being a human like yourselves, were you born with these powers?” Arkaantho asked.

“No, it’s a long story. I will tell you after we make camp.” Nargyn replied.

“Camp?” Arkaantho asked, “Don’t tell me you’re going to spend the night here.”

“Well we are humans and we need all the necessities to live, thanks very much,”

Norgark said as he stumbles onto an emerged root. “Night is only moments away...” He taps the ground with his foot.

“This place seems awfully well, let’s go dry wood hunting.”

As Nargyn designed the stones in a circular shape, Arkaantho and Norgark collected the woods and foods.

A fire was started and with branches and huge leaves from Chuk tree, they made two tents. Arkaantho made it clear to them that he doesn't sleep and he will spend the night on a huge stone which was several meters away from them.

It was almost midnight and the two was chewing on nuts and other fruits. Nargyn offered a mango to Arkaantho, which he refused. "Tell me." He said.

"What?" She replied.

"About how you're so distinct from the other humans." He said.

She sat back, leaning on the tree behind her, "It was a beautiful day, and we went to the woods for playing hide and seek." As she told the story of their past, images appeared in Arkaantho's mind as if they were his memories.

"Me, Norgark and seven others, finished our chores. The rain stopped as we finished them and ran to the tree which we marked as our meeting place. Before each of us met on the spot, we should gather twigs. When we meet, whoever has the smallest twig would have to count to fifty as others would scatter to their hiding places, and I was it."

“Just when I finished, I looked at the ground, because when Norgark gets excited, he is very easy to track, especially in a forest.”

“So that’s how you fi...” Norgark began to retort when she looked at him and stopped. “I found him in a bush which was filled with pink berries. I asked him where the others were but there were two things that caught our attention. Two, enlarged glowing berries hung on the side, hidden out of sight, but not from me. I plucked one and he, the other. It looked so delicious we bit it and started chewing chunks.” She sighed, “That was the sweetest, delicious berry I had.” Norgark spread his arms his

eyebrows shot up and his mouth open in shock, “We had, sorry.”

“Then after eating it whole, which was surprisingly seedless, I could hear voices in my head. I could hear Norgark, having issues with how he was the always the first one to be found whenever I was it, and from the others all around me. I took it as an advantage. I could hear the excited thoughts of the others and that gave away their position. After I have found all of them and when they were complaining amongst themselves as they were discovered so easily, I saw an old woman.”

Arkaantho saw how the old woman looked. She had white ragged hair which

hung from her head to the forest floor and wore a long wide greyish robe. She smiled at her with mouth deprived of teeth. His eyes were white as if she had no pupils and wrinkly face which gave her the aspect of hundred and fifty-year-old.

“Just a glimpse I saw, then she moved behind a tree. I ran and found out she wasn’t there. As we grew old her existence only seemed like a mere imagination of my wild mind.”

She looked at Arkaantho breaking a smile, “That’s how we got our powers.”

“Hey, what about my one!” Norgark said as he looked at her, surprised about how absent she was of him.

She broke her eye contact, as if interrupted, “Oh, well one-day Norgark was too angry studying and blew a tantrum. Turns out all the metals flew through the walls of the house and got stuck on him. Since then he has become very attractive to metals.” He frowned at her as to how short his story was. He chuckled, “Well, you never cease to irritate my sister.” She smiled back and continued her stare at Arkaantho.

“Tell me yours, how you got your powers?” “I was born with it,” Arkaantho replied. “A certain man took me in and raised me, helped me to harness the power within

me”, He looked at his hand as he curled and uncurled the fingers.

“That’s why your eyes glow when you use it?” She asked.

“Perhaps,” He replied.

“You don’t have parents?” She asked bending near to him.

“...No.” He replied. As the words came out of his mouth, his eyes furrowed as the dark lord never told him how they died.

“Well us too.” She scoffed.

Norgark yawned, “Oh it’s too late, I’m dozing off”, He took a bunch of leaves, bound them together and rest his head on it. Nargyn looked at him and turned to

Arkaantho who got up and walked to the stone.

He sat there, with his legs crossed and balling his fist, joining them together he closed his eyes losing himself in deep meditation.

A soft rustling of bushes broke his concentration. He turned and found that the twins vanished. It was midnight. The campfire remained lit, but the sheets were scrambled. He got up and walked around the camp, while he was searching he thought about what Nargyn said about how Norgark leaves tracks whenever they'd play hide and seek. He walked to Norgark's place and looked for broken

dried left, twigs and stem on smaller plants. But there were none.

He walked to the bush which rustled and saw footprints, black as coal. He followed.

The tracks led him to a small hut surrounded with think vines. It seemed decades old with decaying hays on the roof and blackened walls, with a door which barely held onto the walls with its rusted hinges.

He walked in, careful not to call out to them as it may alert the one who abducted them. The hut seemed larger inside, quite as large as half of a mansion.

Aside from the furniture covered in cobwebs, a trap door on the floor ahead

caught his interest. He pulled the handle, a breeze of dust swept onto his face. Opening it he climbed down the ladder. He climbed down into what seemed like a dome-shaped room. A person in greyish blue robes and hood was doing something on a table. On the ceiling, hung a small jar where countless of fireflies few around, lighting the whole room. He instantly recognized it was the witch.

“Tell me where have you kept the two humans while you still have your head on your shoulders.” Arkaantho threatened her.

She chuckled hearing those words, her voice was sharp and crackling. “Now what

could you do? You are just a lost pup." She turned revealing her face which seemed sixty-year-old younger and a smile revealing her white teeth.

Arkaantho looked at her shadow. As if to ensure him that it didn't work, she walked to another table, grabbing a mortar and smashing it on some leaves.

Arkaantho was surprised he tried to manipulate her shadow, but it didn't work.

After a while, her shadow vanished.

"Would you like some tea?" Her voice sounded more like a normal woman with a normal tone.

She laughed as Arkaantho narrowed his eyes. "Don't worry I won't poison you."

She waved her hand and a table with two chairs materialized into existence. She sat on one while motioning him to the other. He pulled the chair and sat, facing the witch was slowly becoming younger as time passed.

“Now, I don’t have much time so, tell me what do you want to know?” She asked as she sipped from her porcelain cup.

Arkaantho sensed that this witch was not the malicious one and thought about his questions.

“Who are you?” He asked.

“Why, you know!” She waved her hand in amusement. “I am the witch! C’mon, ask something else,” She looked at him.

He caught a hint in her eyes that made him feel he should ask about his journey.

“How will I go to Egypt?” He asked.

She waved her finger sideways, “No more questions unless you take a sip.”

He obeyed her and asked again.

“Well...” She started, “Going is easy but reaching there is the tough one which even I do not know!” She breathed a laugh.

“Anything else?”

“What do you know about me?! Who are you?” He asked.

“Ah! I am the witch! What else, I know everything about you”, She smiled resting her elbow on the table with her face on the palm, “My dear.”

He looked at her with both caution and curiosity, "Since you do perhaps I should end your expiring life."

The witch laughed, "Well, you can go ahead and do it I won't mind." She looked at him with a wrinkle of earnest.

"From what it seems, you abducted those twins just to talk to me." He said.

"Ah, was it that obvious? Or maybe it's impressive because I'm growing old." She chuckled.

"You awfully seem glad to see me." He said as he noticed that she constantly kept looking into his eyes and smile as if she met someone she knew after a long time.

“Well, I don’t have much time so you should pick up your pace!” His gaze quickly moved to the window.

“What will happen if I don’t ask you?” He asked crossly.

“Just take it and I will vanish.” Her grin faded for a moment and relighted again,

“We don’t want that now do we?”

“Fine”, he sighed, “Where are the twins?”

“They are here!” She spread her arms.

“Though you will find them after you re-enter this room.”

He got up from his seat, “Then there is nothing else to know about.”

“Are you sure?” She asked, her brows shot up. “What about your future and many things that...”

“I don’t care!” He cut her off. “I make my own future, I don’t need such ancient foreteller to guide me on my own path.”

“You haven’t changed at all.” She said under her breath as she leaned back her eyes down.

“What?” He turned. She closed her eyes. Behind her eyelids, blue glowed. “A dark path awaits you, full of treachery, full of pain and mystery. You are being used by someone, whose name should not be uttered, for a purpose greater than yourself. There are four dark warriors

each strong enough to challenge the gods themselves and kill them, for they are the beings born from pure darkness. Upon order, they will hunt down even you!" She gasped for air when the blue glow disappeared.

"What mystery? Who is using me? Who are the dark warriors?!" Arkaantho slammed his fist on the table.

"Calm down, I'm not myself when I speak about someone's future!

"Then?" He yelled.

"Because it's the spirits that talks to you, not me!" She breathed, her hair was black before now its grey.

“How will I defeat the dark warriors?” He asked.

“I’m sorry dear, only the one with dark malice could help you if he favors you.”

She said dolefully.

He sighed, as her figure started to ripple.

“You’re... something is happening to you.

“Oh, my!” She said as he looked at her arms and her body, “Well this is it dear! Good luck.” She waved at him as her body quickly dissociated in the air.

Arkaantho climbed up the ladder and closed the trap door. He opened it again, this time there was no breeze coming out.

He understood that the witch’s intention was to meet him, that’s why she abducted

those twins so that she could give him what she already gave.

He descended to the dome-shaped room and found the two were bound to a wall.

From the window on the left, the moonlight lit the room blue. They seemed to be unconscious. Arkaantho untied Nargyn first. She looked at him with uncertainty, then ensured of him, she smiled and wrapped her arms around him, resting her head on his right shoulder as if liberated from a cruel torment. Arkaantho froze at her behavior, he felt her body tightly pressed against his. He could feel her excited breaths. He tried to think of something but his mind went blank until

she released him, smiling as she locked her green eyes with him. He turned to the other and untied him as well.

“Ugh, damnation!” He cried out in frustration. “Appreciated your help. You wouldn’t have had to go through the trouble for rescuing us if my concentration hadn’t slipped.”

“It... it’s alright.” He turned to Nargyn who completely ignored her brother and kept looking at him.

“We should leave this place.” He said as he broke the eye contact and climbed the ladder.

“Couldn’t agree more!” Norgark said as they followed him.

CHAPTER V

SUDIDEN PREDILECTION

Dawn broke as the sun painted the black sky to blue and yellow. They have been walking since they got out of the witch's hut, losing their way while returning to the camp. The twins sat under a banyan tree at the edge of the forest, exhausted from long hours of walking, while Arkaantho foraged nearby bushes.

“Ok, so where are we going actually?” Norgark asked as he mouthed some walnuts.

"I am going to Egypt." He answered as he looked at the distance ahead, covered with green plains with deer running about.

"If you wish to follow me till there then don't ask any more question about the journey."

"Egypt?" Nargyn and Norgark asked together then looked at each other, shooting up an eyebrow at their own responses.

"No problem boss..." Norgark answered.

"...We have our uncle there so it will be like a reunion for us!" Nargyn uttered the rest, cutting off Norgark in mid-sentence and earning a frown from her brother.

“After some time, get ready we have a long walk ahead,” Arkaantho said looked at the sun, estimating the time.

“Walking?! No sir!” Norgark stood up. Arkaantho turned to him in response.

“I have a better idea, and it can be utilized if met the correct conditions.” He said.

“What is it?” Arkaantho asked.

“You got any giant metal disc or anything huge?” He said. Nargyn sighed and hit her palm on her forehead, “Not that again.”

“Remember last time what you did?” She asked.

“What? Oh!” He laughed at the reminder. “That was fully intentional!” He held his hands up,

“Like, burying us under a pond with a ton of metal and killing us was intentional!”

She replied, grumbling the words as she folded her arms.

“Trust me, I got this!” He said grinning.

She scoffed, “Trusting you is like trusting a snake that won’t bite when I hit it.”

“What are you two fighting about?”

Arkaantho broke them off, crossing his arms.

“You’ll see!” He said motioning him to step back.

Arkaantho did as he motioned and he busied himself touching the ground and concentrating.

Sweat rolled down his cheek and forehead as he frowned in concentration. He gritted his teeth, his body flexed as if he was pulling an elephant. Then after a lot of effort, a giant metal plane burst out from the ground sending him above and splashing soil on both Arkaantho and Nargyn.

“Eww! Worms!” She yelled in disgust as she picked up one by one from her shoulders and head, throwing them back into the hole while Arkaantho swept the soil from his body and head. Norgark landed on top of a tree away from them as he kept shouting, still thinking that he was in the air.

Arkaantho finished sweeping the dirt and looked at the giant metal bar which was unlikely shiny, gleaming in the sunlight.

Norgark landed on the ground, embarrassed that everyone heard his cry and tried to cover it up teasing his sister for being afraid of worms.

“I’m not afraid of them!” She retorted back.
“Enough!” Arkaantho said, breaking the twins fight.

“How is this going to help us reach Egypt?”
Arkaantho asked them.

“Well, climb on and let yourself be free!” Norgark said, as he cheerfully floated up and stood in the middle. Arkaantho and

Nargyn followed the lead. He stood behind Norgark and Nargyn beside Arkaantho.

“Buckle up!” As Norgark said long rails rose from the metal bed. They all grabbed the railing tight and the metal bar floated from the ground shooting ahead at a high-speed.

The wind blew across his face, his fur waves on ocean driven by the fore of wind. They were almost as high as the pure white clouds. Landscapes shifted in moments, they were now above a sea. The water below gleamed as the Sun showered it with its warm light complimenting its characteristic blue colour.

He turned to the other side and saw Nargyn's brown hair trailed behind her as she looked at the green mountains on the other side. As if she felt his gaze on her, she turned to him and smiled when her eyes met his.

He froze, for some reason, he couldn't move his head and was forced to look at her while she giggled as his whiskers floated over his eyes.

"I can go higher!" Norgark yelled interrupting her mind trick, which Arkaantho realized when he got back his feeling in the head.

"NO!" She yelled back, the voices were more like quite conversations compared to

the roaring of the wind. “There is no need for that!”

“C’mon, I have grown and my control over my powerful did as well so I’m pretty sure that this time it won’t be Vinza all over again!” He yelled as he motions the bar to climb up.

They were a few feet below the clouds now. The sight above was blocked by the thick wet mist while Nargyn put up her hand into the cloud as if to feel the satisfying foam above the cloud body.

“Yeah!” Norgark cried out in cheerfully as he lets go of the railings and spread his arms taking in the moment.

Unlike them, Arkaantho was couldn't feel the joy of flying, so he decided to take his time and observe how they let their guard down and deprive their commonest of senses just to enjoy which would seem like a short live pleasure.

Nargyn slides to her right and into Arkaantho as the metal bar banks right. She blushed as her body collides with his, splashing her hair onto his face and tried to get back to her position only to slide back again.

“He can be so reckless sometimes.” She said, her voice was a soft whisper.

Arkaantho nodded in reply. The broad metal sheet now banks left and he found

himself slowly sliding towards. His furry grip on the plane rails slipped. Noticing it, Nargyn smiled as she put her hand on her mouth to hide it from him.

“I want to ask you something.” She said as she twirls her hair, looking at her right.

“Go ahead.” He said.

“Well, I’ve been wondering. If we land in Egypt, would we separate our ways?” She asked turning to him.

“That depends entirely on you.” He answered casually.

“So, is it a no?” Her eyes lit up.

“I said, it’s up to you. If you wish to then you can separate your ways.” He said, slightly gritting his teeth.

“What if we don’t?” She asked again, hoping for an answer, to which Arkaantho replied with a stern look.

“Oh, thank you.” She said cheerfully. He sighed trying to move more left but resulted in failure.

“What are you doing Norgark?!” Arkaantho yelled as the bar was slowly rotated to the right.

“Sorry, my bad!” He said as he brought it to its original position, correcting Arkaantho of his thought.

The cloud ahead started to change from white to grey, and then to black in moments as they flew. Moments ago, the air had comfortable warmth on it, but now

it converted with a chill. “Here comes the best part! Wahoo!” Norgark cried as if to be delighted by the sight of black clouds ahead.

The winds raced past them now, much stronger than before. Arkaantho could hardly keep his eyes open with all the wetness and strong wind around them. He put his hand before his eyes and tried to look through the crevices between his fingers. Nargyn walked to his side and wrapped her arms around his left arm with her face down. The hood behind her danced in the wind, which she failed to put it on.

“Norgark! You’ve had your fun now let’s descend! We may have come near Egypt!”

She cried out, but Norgark was too busy reveling in his moment. She gritted her teeth and Norgark pulled his arms from his sides and clutched the railing. The metal bar face down a little and they dived into the cloud. As soon as they were under the clouds waves of mountain approached them like teeth of a giant creature.

Norgark maneuverers the bar dodging the mountains. A thunder rumbled and fell on to the bar. It banked right and as it did so, it crashed into a mountain.

The bar was broken into two momentarily as if a glass was smacked on to an anvil.

They were now in the air, Norgark tried to control both the separated metals but his one crashed on a plateau which rolled violently on contact. Nargyn cried out to her brother and their metal crashed onto a hill sending Arkaantho flying into a river. He pierced through the water surface and into the depth. This was his first-time inside water. He covered his muzzle and tried to focus his powers as the water washed over into his ears, nostrils, and mouth. He tried to yell out, instead only bubbles came out and more water hit his lungs disorienting him. He could feel his lungs were being flooded with the liquid and he struggled with his limbs to reach

the surface only to sink deeper as the bobbling sound in his ears intensifies.

He coughs up his air inside as the water replace it in his lungs and he felt his body was going to explode. He clutched his throat to prevent further water intake, but it was too late. His vision darkens around the edges, and the more he blinks, the more he feels the eyelids may shut forever. Just when he was about to give a voice reached his mind. “Please, hold on just a bit longer! I am coming! Arkaantho!” It was Nargyn’s. He could barely see her, diving through the water surface and swim towards him, her limbs moving out of desperation. He

could not move; small bubbles escape his mouth.

She reached him, wrapping her fingers around his head she pressed her mouth against his. He could feel the air returning to his lungs as the water which was replaced by it exiting through his nostrils. Releasing, she grabbed the collar of his armour with both hands and kicked her legs to the surface.

They broke through the surface and she swam to the nearby bank, putting him on the muddy grass. She coughed out the water and gasped for air.

He could see her but his body was numb. She recovered and put her ear near his

mouth. She moved off, undid his armour and started to press on his chest, sending huge tremors of pressure along with lungful of breaths blew through her mouth into his.

The liquid washed the grass, as he vomited it out. She pressed harder on the chest and faster resulting more water to spray out from his mouth and nostrils. Finally, the water was out and his lungs could never feel much emptier and filled with air.

He coughed up the last of the water as he sat up and faced the ground pressing his arms on the green floor. She looked at him, her eyes breaking into tears.

Arkaantho turned to her as he heard her sobbing. She covered her face with her palms.

“I wish... I wish I was this much strong when my... my father...” Her voice was broken. Arkaantho sat beside her thinking what she was saying.

She wrapped her arms around his neck, digging her face into his chest. Her tears rolled down his torso as she sobbed and gasped for air. He put his hand on her head slowly brushing her hair with his palm.

“My father died just like this when Norgark was too much overjoyed on his first discovery of his power.” She pulled herself off him. “I couldn’t save him, how I

saved you! If I had been not afraid, he'd still be here. If I... If I..." She covered her face again.

Arkaantho looked at her, he doesn't have anything to say to her sudden outburst of emotion, shocking him.

Instead, he looked at her as much apologetically as possible.

She stood up wiping her eyes off the tears, "I'm sorry. I wasn't myself", she looked at him and blushed. She turned around instantly with a tad of regret of her behavior towards him.

He understood how awkward she felt. He stood up and put on his armour.

“In case you’re wondering how Norgark is. He is fine”, she uttered the last three words sharply as she walked to a tree and sat under it.

Thunder rumbled in the sky and the rain fell soaking everything. They took shelter under a tree when suddenly slabs of metal came flying towards them and hovered above their heads.

Norgark approached them with a lab of metal above him as well. Nargyn dashed past Arkaantho to him and swung her fists across his face. He stood there and let her vent her frustrations on him. She slapped him across his face again and sobbed covering her mouth. He looked at her,

sorrow floated on his face and he took her into a hug.

Arkaantho stood there and saw how the twins resolved their emotions. After venting their grief, they walked to Arkaantho, bearing the look, what to do next.

For hours, they wandered the green plains. The metal slabs kept them from getting soaked but not from suffering the chillness of the cold. As the sun sets, they have set up camp and a fire where they roasted the iguanas on sticks. It smelled delicious and tasted alike. For the first time on his journey, Arkaantho has eaten something that wasn't nuts and fruits. Today, Norgark

was quiet. He wasn't talking about the food and the weather, just gulping down the meat grumpily. He glanced at Arkaantho then busied himself again with the rest of the iguanas which Nargyn left.

For some time, they sat quietly around the fire staring at the dance of the blazing flame. The place was very quiet. No chirping of crickets and frogs. Finally breaking the silence, Norgark spoke.

"Heck of a day, huh?" He said softly without breaking his gaze on the fire. Arkaantho looked at him in reply.

"Well, we've come very far in such short time," Nargyn spoke trying to keep up the mood.

“I hope we haven’t flown across Egypt?”

She asked him.

“No, we’ve just flown across Greece. It’s rainy season here, so that’s why the deluge stops less.” He answered.

“Then how far, we have to go?” Arkaantho asked.

“Not much, just beyond this is a huge river. After we cross it we’ll be on the savanna in no time.” He said breaking his gaze and looking at Arkaantho.

He nodded and felt like as if Norgark has yet to apologize to him for almost killing him, but he seemed to be too nervous.

Arkaantho stood up, “There are two caves behind you. There is nothing in there so

you can rest easy. I will be near the cliff if anything happens.” He said as he walked to the cliff behind a raspberry bush.

The moon’s blue shine gave the landscape a spectacular blue paint. The air was cool in his nostrils and as he exhaled a cloud white formed near his mouth which disappeared momentarily. He didn’t cross his legs, but let them hang from the edge as he watched the distance ahead.

After several moments of flashback, Nargyn sat beside him on the edge.

“You didn’t sleep?” Arkaantho asked her as she sat beside him.

“No. Wait, are you going to sleep out here, there are a lot of spaces in my cave.” She

said and the last words made her blush in surprise.

“I don’t feel like so.” He answered.

“What kind of wolf doesn’t feel like sleeping?” She asked curiously.

“My kind.” He replied coldly as he kept looking at the distance.

“I see,” She said, looking at the distance as well. Don’t you at least try to...”

“Thank you.” He said, without looking at her, breaking her in the middle.

Her eyes widened, turning to him. “It was nothing, I... was just...”

“You don’t have to say anything.” He said cutting her off again. “You could’ve died to try to save me, but you weren’t afraid.

That's feeling is for someone who you know, who you keep close to you like your brother. Why did I feel that you had the same feeling towards me? You don't even know me or what I'm capable of." He spoke still looking at the far away trees.

She looked away for a while, then she slid her hands over his grabbing it softly. "It's because... I... have never seen someone like you in my life." She said, her voice half broken.

Arkaantho turned his gaze to her from the distance, bewildered. "How do you mean?" "Like someone who would do the same for me without thinking twice", she said. "Someone who has honor, unrelenting

courage and utmost care for the ones in his company.”

“What are you saying? How could you know me just by being in my mind?” He asked as he got more confused.

“I don’t know, but when I did, it all came to me like a memory.” She replied.

“How could you be so sure?” He asked, narrowing his eyes.

“Because I... believe in you.” She replied with a small smile on her face.

She looked at him for a while. He could see her green eyes glistening in the moonlight.

“It’s because... I love you.” She whispered.

She leaned forward, placing her palm on his cheek and pressed a gentle kiss on the

lips. She lowered her head, breathed a laugh when she came to release. Arkaantho's eyes widened, his mouth laid open at her action and felt as if a hammer hit hard on his heart.

“What... is this sudden affection towards me? We are of different kinds... does that not bother you?” He asked, his body felt towards the brink of petrification.

“Does it to you?” She replied, without looking up, her smile faded instantly. Arkaantho’s jaw shut and looked away for he couldn’t find an answer.

“As long it doesn’t bother you, it won’t to me.” She said as she got up and strode to the cave.

Her absolute strange behavior that night baffled him up to such a point that he couldn't meditate, his mind was too busy understanding how boundless could human's complication be.

In the morning, they continued their trek to savanna. They walked down the hill and crossed the river in silence. Arkaantho thought of doing something about Nargyn's feelings towards him, but for the first time, he couldn't find a solution for it. They walked north for hours after they crossed the river. As the soil beneath slowly turned to sand, looking ahead Nargyn gasped and clasped her mouth.

It was a tree, tall and wide as the banyan, except it didn't flourish with green like the rest. The wood was pitch black with branches spread out like spikes from which bodies are hung.

"Dead tree," Arkaantho said as he counted twenty bodies each hanging with a noose around its neck. Most of the bodies seem months old, but only a few of them retained the original colour of their skin, each of the faces deformed by the animals that fed on their rotten flesh and organs.

The crows fed on the eyes and tongues of the bodies, where larger animals like vultures fed on limbs. Some of the nooses hung without the bodies, which seem like

the bodies were taken. It was a very horrific sight for the twins, but still, there were no humans around, so how did these bodies come to be here.

They continued, keeping away for about twenty meters away from them, as per to the dark lord's instructions. Otherwise, the ghosts would come after him, instead of seeking vengeance upon their killers.

In the distance, they've spotted a settlement. "Probably an average place to spend the night", Norgark said. The sun began to set, it would soon be dusk. "The place seems big, what do you say?" The rest of the company agreed.

Two guards each armed with a spear, wearing red leather armour looked at them narrowly as they approached the entrance. “Where did you think you’re going?” One of them asked gritting his teeth as he looked at Arkaantho.

Nargyn directed their attention towards her and looked at them for a moment. With a smile from the guards, the trio was momentarily welcomed into the village. “This place has suffered from a mysterious attack.” She commented as they walk the streets. Most of the men and women were found kneeling before a shrine and praying, weeping as they did so.

“Mysterious, how do you mean?” Arkaantho asked as he looked at the people weeping as if they lost someone very close to them forever.

“Mysterious like, as if someone gets possessed by something and attacks their closest ones without an actual reason or cause,” she grunted as she clasped her mind, “The pain, it’s too much.”

“Take it easy, sister,” Norgark said touching her shoulders, “There is no need for you to go inside their minds and burden their pain. Besides we will be gone by morning.”

“He is right,” Arkaantho said, “Their problem is not our business.”

They enter a tavern, unlike his last visit to one in the valley, this one was only one-fourth full. Arkaantho and Nargyn sat on a table while Norgark grabbed some snacks for supper.

He looked at her, after what happened last night, she unusually seemed troubled. “I am fine.” She said with a smile, “you have nothing to worry about.”

He instantly regretted bringing up the thought of last night, “You just seemed stressed, and so, I thought the bodies and the crying of people were troubling you.”

She looked at him and grabbed his hand. “The pain, it was so much, I... I can’t forget it even if I want to.”

Arkaantho could understand how much the pain was for her, judging by the tight grip on his hand.

“Well!” Norgark said as he brought some bread, block of cheese, two large steaks of meat and some beer and put them on the table. “Feast your hollow bellies!”

She released her hand instantly when she first heard him and her eyes widened at the sight of the foods. “Why so many... Did you buy all these?!”

He sat on the chair, “Yeah. Why, not enough?” He asked as he starts to take two loaves of bread and put cheese and meat between them.

“You...” She sighed, “Never mind.”

Arkaantho only ate only one chunk of the steak and left the rest for them.

"I know this won't be finished right now. So, the dinner is also covered then." He said as he took a polythene bag and start to pack the foods.

"Well..." Nargyn stared at the man who kept filling his mouth more than he could swallow. "Who paid for all this?!"

In reply, Norgark gave her an awkward stare then continued chewing waving his hand, signing that it didn't matter.

CHAPTER VI

FACELESS TERROR

A rkaantho walked up the stairs to the roof of the tavern while the twins slept. He stood near the edge for some time looking at the people who seemed to be living in a terrifying reality that one of them would be taken away in any moment. But no such thing happened for some time. He wondered why and what's causing this, but until he has a lead, his attempts to see through the problem would bore more as he is unlike the humankind.

Clearing his mind, he thought about expanding the capability of his powers by

being at different places at the same time. He had an idea of it. He sat on edge of the roof and aimed his hand at his shadow. He could feel it, like touching a fish in deep black water. He concentrated his focus, severing his senses from the surroundings and focusing them on one point.

As he kept thinking of splitting his shadow into more than one, his shadow began to move on its own, numeral black shades stretched out from it which seem like his shadow is producing more shadows.

A cry reached his ears, breaking his concentration. The splitting process wasn't complete so the shadows returned to its original shadow. He looked at the direction

of the source, the loud cry was suddenly transformed into muffled voice. He dashed towards it, jumping from rooftop to rooftop. By the time he got there, standing above an alley, there was no one there. He returned to the rooftop of the tavern and found Nargyn standing there, her face bore a worried look.

“What happened? You found something?” She asked as she stepped closer to him. “No, I thought something happened...” He changed his thoughts, “Why are you out here so late, and how did you know I was here?” He asked.

She put her hand on his chest, “We are connected”, she said smiling, “And... somehow your mind got agitated.”

He was surprised how she could feel what he feels. He thought what if she heard his thoughts, realizing this, he cleared his mind again preventing her from exploring his memories.

She looked at him and lowered her head. “Of course, if it troubles you then I’m sorry to be in your mind.” She said, her tone softens. “I... was just...” Before she could finish, he put his hand on her shoulder. “You should go and take rest. You sound... restless.” He said.

She raised her head and looked at him, smiling she gave him a hug before climbing down the stairs.

The next morning, Arkaantho went into the twins' room to wake them up for the journey, only to discover that Norgark was missing.

“He was here when I came down last night.” She said, her eyes widened. “He has never gone wander out in the night, or have the tendency to wake up early in the morning, especially without sleeping.”

“I can see that.” He said. “Just get ready to leave. We will walk out as soon as I find him.”

As he walked out the tavern, his first thought was to search in the alley. When he got there, he saw a crowd near the end with a man and a woman crying as they bash their heads on the wall. He walked up to them and saw a girl of between child and maturity, had her throat sliced till the neck bone and a deep red hole on her chest. It was gruesome. Her jaw laid wide open, her eyes looked towards the sky. The blood on her neck and the chest was surprisingly fresh as if she was killed moments ago.

His sense tingled as if someone from behind was approaching him with a killing intent. He quickly turned and saw

it was Norgark with an exhausted look on his face.

“I may have something about this ‘mysterious attack’!”, he said as he pants. “I didn’t see the perpetrator but I may have some clues that will lead us to them.”

Arkaantho frowned, “Them? Since when did you start to care about this place?”

“Since last night. When I saw an innocent girl almost beheaded for no reason!” He snapped, his jaw clenched. “And I need your help.”

Both returned to the tavern. The twins sat opposite to each other while Arkaantho leaned against a wall with his arms crossed. Nargyn didn’t have to ask

Norgark as she asked Arkaantho in his mind to fill her up.

“Last night, I was on the rooftop looking out for anything strange”, Arkaantho started, “I heard a cry of a girl. When I got there, the place was empty.” His brow furrowed. “How is it that you found out about the perpetrator when I couldn't even sense its shadow?”

Norgark cleared his throat putting his left leg over the right and leaning back comfortably, “Well, after Nargyn walked down the stairs, my sleep just vanished after what I heard. So, I went out of the tavern through the window for some strolling.”

“Why through the window?” Nargyn asked, her normal expression turned to brooding.

“Because of the lads downstairs. Didn’t want to attract unwanted attention”, he smiled which quickly turned dark, “Besides, why the heck am I being questioned for finding something which could help these people from this terror, like as if I am one?!”

Nargyn shrugged, “Don’t worry, you acted weird for a little while, now you’re fine”, She chuckled, “Probably because of the barrel which you emptied last night.”

“Yeah, yeah.” He waved away her words in an exasperated way.

“So?” Asked Arkaantho.

“What ‘so’?” He asked back.

Arkaantho gave him a stare which reminded him of his unanswered question.

“Oh, that!” He said putting his finger up in reminder. He sat up, both feet on the ground and his arms resting on the table with fingers tangled. “Last night, I heard a cry of a girl, which you also heard. When I got there, in the alley, there was no one. So, I decided to investigate further.” There was a hint of guilt on his face.

“I went deeper into the alley till the dead end, and I found a door, small enough for a child of eight to crawl in and out easily.

As I crawled to the other end of the tunnel,

exiting outside the settlement, I saw the most disgusting sight on God's world." He looked at Arkaantho, his expression was full of hatred and rage.

"I don't know what it was, but it was pale. Its body was made of rotten flesh, no hair on the head or so on but seemed just like us with a mouth that chewed the heart of the girl."

"What did you do?" Nargyn asked leaning towards him.

"Nothing." He said.

Arkaantho looked at him. A tear rolled down Norgark's cheek.

"By the time I got my nerves back, the girl laid dead and the creature escaped. And I

took her corpse into the village and the people came in." He swiped his palm across both of his cheeks.

Nargyn got up and stood beside him, hugging his head.

Arkaantho walked up to the door. As he opened it Norgark called out.

"Where are you going?"

"I'm going to get this village rid of that beast." He answered.

"Not until, moonlight you're not!" He cried out.

He turned to the man drowned in sorrow.

"Tonight, we'll go and behead it before it leaves its abode to kill someone else once

and for all." He punched the table gritting his teeth.

Arkaantho narrowed his eyes and closed the door. "Why at night?"

"Because I searched the whole damned area at first light and there was no sight of it. Besides the people only remembers being attacked in the cover of night."

Norgark cried out in anger but realizing to whom he was addressing to, his voice lowered from the first sentence.

"Keep your anger contained. Best to use all of it to avenge your dear 'little girl'," said Arkaantho as he opened the door and Norgark slowly nodded. "Fine... 'Till nightfall then."

Norgark was stoning his sword in a shop of metalware while Arkaantho secretly practiced his newly invented technique.

Nargyn made a bow from a branch of an oak tree with several arrows with crow feathers as fletching, which she showed to them while they departed towards the place where the creature was last seen.

“Oh, nice!” Norgark said as he admired the shiny silvery string.

“Why, thanks,” She replied with a smile,
“Nargyn you know what to do?” Arkaantho asked.

“Yes,” she answered retaining her smile, her cheeks flushed red for it was the first time Arkaantho called her by her name.

“Perfect. Sister goes to your bird’s nest and keep an eye out for something uncanny,” Norgark said as he laughed mockingly at her.

Her smile immediately turned to frown. Before she could retort Arkaantho broke her off, putting up a hand.

“If you do see something, don’t go ahead and try to kill it, just pin it down.” Arkaantho motioned his finger on his knee, “Hide, increase the distance gap then blow the horn, we will be here.”

As Nargyn took her position on the tavern roof, they walked out of the village. A boy with his mother was standing at the entrance.

“Mom, why isn’t father here yet, it’s already sundown!” the boy asked.

“Don’t worry, he will be here,” The mother replied with a reassuring smile.

“Poor man, he shouldn’t have gone out right now,” Norgark said after they walked a certain distance from the worried family.

“Focus, we don’t have time to be in their shoes right now,” Arkaantho said as he motioned him to lead.

“Yes, boss”, he said nodding as he led him to the site.

They have reached the site of the creature which was seen last night by Norgark. Norgark swiped his finger across a lamina of a banana leaf.

“God, it’s so disgusting!” He snapped, greyish goo sprayed around him as shook his hand to get rid of it.

“Arkaantho grabbed his shoulder and brought his finger to his muzzle, motioning him to be silent.

“There are these goos over there, there and all the way over there into the woods.” He whispered as he pointed the places out.

The goo vanished after few steps away from them with a trail of blood on it, but it didn’t on the way into the forest. Judging, he realized that this creature is a nocturnal and a cannibalistic carnivore. Observing the surrounding, he decided and motioned

Norgark to follow him, following the trail into the woods.

“Why does everything have to involve forest?” He mumbled, annoyed of low branches and spiders crawling on his back which he shakes it off with a shudder of disgust.

After proceeding a few steps, he could hear crackling and slurping noises.

“Do you hear that?” Arkaantho whispered, to which Norgark shook his head.

“Man, you’re a man-wolf, ‘course your senses are far more enhanced than ours, no wonder why I can’t hear...” Norgark was stopped in mid as Arkaantho held up his hand and crouched.

He instantly froze after crouching. Arkaantho turned his head to him slowly and with his long black nails, he pointed on his left.

Norgark gasped as he saw the creature chewing off a bone marrow from one hand and a heart from the other. The moonlight, pierced through the canopy above it, like a skylight illuminating a room. Its body seemed fully slime, grey gleamed on it and shifted as it moved, like as if was made of oil. Its head deprived of eyes and ears had only a mouth which was crimson red with blood with bits of flesh stuck on. It growled as it chewed on with it small surprisingly

gleaming teeth while it stuffed its mouth with both the heart and the bone.

Arkaantho craned his head over the bush to see a man of middle age without eyes and arms, left with a hole on his chest.

Norgark tried to charge, but Arkaantho grabbed his abdomen and pulled him behind, causing his nails to dig into his flesh.

Norgark gave him an angry look. Arkaantho replied with the same look, as Norgark clutched the belly with his hand.

After a moment of observation, its body seemed to be bubbling, spraying goo all over the place. It grunted and growled as it used its nails to tear through the skin of

the goo into a light brown and plain one. As it ripped through its own skin from the head, it revealed another of more human-like, with brown hair and beard, which was the exact facial aspect of the man, the father of that boy, who laid dead on the ground.

Norgark, couldn't hold in the disgust anymore and threw up all his dinner, giving away their position. Arkaantho grabbed Norgark by the collar of his armour and threw him several feet away from the creature and him, unsheathing his sword. As it quickly turned to them, growling as if it found its dessert.

He held his sword between him and the creature, who circled around him like how a wolf would around a lamb, ready to strike.

It hissed, its mouth opens wide where the long thin tongue swayed sideways out of the mouth.

“F...Fi...na...ly!” It spoke as its tongue changed into more human. “The sp...awn of da...da...rk...ness!” It hissed as it said the last word.

“What are you?” Arkaantho murmured.

“I a...m the be...ing that can ta...ke the sha...pes of other...s,” It said as the voice becomes clearer. “You can call me, shapeless, faceless!” It lunged at him,

finishing the sentence, with its long hands aiming at his neck.

Arkaantho dodged, he didn't have time to recover while it uses its long retractable nails to continue slashing at him. He parried one hand with the sword and in counter severed the other.

A sound of horn reached his ears. He turned back realizing that it was Nargyn. Before he could regret his recklessness, the faceless dug its nails into his shoulder and blew a hard kick across his head, sending him to a nearby tree, dazing him.

When Arkaantho's senses recovers, the faceless wasn't with him. His eyes glowed with rage.

Arkaantho got up and ran towards the village as he saw the figure doing the same. When the village entrance came into view he saw the creature return to its original form, with the skin of the man on the ground, fighting with Norgark, as he commanded a cloud of knives, which flew at the creature.

It dodged every single knife, grabbing a couple and throwing at Nargyn who kept shooting her arrows. Arkaantho sprinted as fast as he could, while Norgark used a broken part of a metal roof to shield him against the creature which lunged at him and kept striking. Arkaantho blinked to the entrance. Nargyn shot her last arrow

which the creature caught it. It kicked the metal which crashed against his head, then it leaped over him, landing behind. Arkaantho took a knife and threw at it. But before it could reach the metal got in the way, bouncing off the knife. The creature gave a grin before it stabbed the arrow through Norgark neck but got stuck midway. Failing to kill him, it ran a balled fist across his head knocking him out cold. The creature used both of his hands to pierce into the neck of Norgark. Failing to kill him, it ran a balled fist across his head knocking him out cold but by then, Arkaantho blinked and landed a kick on its

head sending it flying, crashing through a wall of a nearby house.

Nargyn cried out and vaulted from the roof. She landed hard, but she didn't stop. She caught him before he could hit the ground.

Arkaantho picked up two long knives and lunged at the downed creature. He kept stabbing it on its head as he landed. Then he grabbed its leg and slammed its body on the knives which laid on the ground.

It screamed in pain. Arkaantho let go of the leg and before he could grab its head, it swept the ground with its malformed feet throwing Arkaantho off the ground.

It leaped on to a wall and lunged at the twins. Nargyn tried to cover her brother, by throwing the bow at it. The instance when the silvery string struck the creature, the grey goo melted as if exposed to high heat. It staggered back when suddenly Arkaantho but the much darker shape, landed a heavy punch on its head sending it flying straight into a barn. She looked at him as he stood before them, his body fully black as it ripples around the edges. Then as he growled loudly, five shadows crawled out of his own shadow. When she turned she saw Arkaantho, his eyes glowed red, with his pupils took for of a triangle shape.

He stood there as if commanding the shadow phantoms as one grabbed his leg and threw him in the air, while the other two leaped from a house roof and slashed its body with the knives. Then more two appeared. One kicked it further away into the air, while the other wrapped himself around it and turned its head upside down landed the ground with it, head first.

With an earthshattering thud, as if a bomb gone had off, the faceless laid in the huge crater it created surrounded by five shadows of Arkaantho.

He approached it, growling as he did so. He grabbed the neck, took a knife and severed it from the body. The creature

seemed more lifeless after the shadows took apart the limbs tore like papers.

The body and the head landed with a loud thud. He could feel his power grew stronger as dark aura emanated from his body, like smoke from a fire.

He turned to the twins, Nargyn sobbed as she placed her head on Norgark's chest. He approached and stood beside her. His aura made Nargyn gasped and her eyes were wide as his gaze was locked onto hers. Steadily the dark aura around him dissipated and the eyes turned normal once again except for the expression of his face. He looked around the surrounding as whatever happened shocked everyone.

There was a little disappointment in his expression that he had to go almost all out for such a low-leveled creature.

CHAPTER VII

THE FIRST KNIGHT OF THE VOID KINGDOM

On the horizon the sun steadily rose from behind the hills spreading its red threads of light all around lighting the sky blue and orange.

Arkaantho finished burning the body of the creature, he walked to the house where the twins were, the house that was gifted to them by the landlord.

He entered the room and found Nargyn sitting next to Norgark, who laid on the bed with a bandage wrapped around his head. She held her hand as the part of the

bedsheet near which she sat was grey with the continuous drops that rolled down her cheeks.

Arkaantho placed his hand on her shoulder. She shuddered at first, then she put her hand over his.

"How is he?" Arkaantho gently asked.

"The herbalist said he will suffer from minor trauma but overall he is okay,"

Nargyn replied, her voice was half broken.

"I don't think he will wake up soon."

Arkaantho removed his hand from her shoulder and placed it behind her head and met her eyes. "You didn't sleep at all," said he, "I will watch over him. Go and rest."

With a nod, she got up. Her sunken eyes gave a last look at his and she wrapped her arms around his neck. "Thank you," she murmured then left the room.

Afternoon came, Arkaantho was sitting beside Norgark with a book in his hand as he runs his eyes through the words of the pages.

Norgark, with a gasp, quickly shot up and sat. His hand in order to keep up with his body, swung around knocking the book off of Arkaantho's hand. The book flew ahead and hit Nargyn on the head. She clutched her head with a loud hiss. Arkaantho hands were still in the position of holding the book even when it wasn't there and his

eyes were wide with the sudden action of both the twins who screamed out of excitement and wrapped each other in each of their arms.

As the siblings finished reuniting, Norgark stood up and gave Arkaantho a bear hug. "Just get off me!" Arkaantho pushed Norgark off, who laughed as he scratched his head out of embarrassment.

"How are you feeling?" Nargyn asked as she sat on the bed.

Norgark sat beside her and reaches his arms around her shoulders, bringing her closer. "You don't have to worry about me. I'm fifteen minutes older than you, you know."

Arkaantho stared at the two as they laugh and giggle at each other as if they met for the first time after being separated from each other for a long time.

Finally, their eyes met Arkaantho who's ones widen out of awkwardness.

"What's wrong?" Asked Nargyn with a perpetual smile.

Norgark extended his other free arm inviting Arkaantho to join. "Well, come on over here brother! If not for you I would've died!"

Arkaantho put up his hand in refusal to which Norgark nodded with a chuckle.

"So, after that length of sleeping, I suppose you are... very hungry?" asked Arkaantho.

In reply, Norgark's belly groaned out loud.
He scratched his head again as he laughed,
"Ah, yes!"

"I will go and bring lunch," Nargyn got up
and walked out of the room leaving the
two staring at her.

Time till dusk went well for the twins as
they set out from the house as soon as
they've finished lunch, strolling from stall
to stall in the carnival that was held nearby
while Arkaantho remained in the house
and continued reading the book 'The forest
lore'.

At night, the duo enters the house with
baskets full of various items dressed in
colourful bags.

Nargyn bought a nice purple velvet robe with a hood, a platinum ring and a bow with some long arrows. Norgark bought a new sword and him too, a black robe and a pair of steel vambraces. In the basket, there was one item that was wrapped in a shiny paper. While the other one bore chocolates and seasonal fruits.

"How did you get all these?!" asked Arkaantho frowning out of confusion.

"Well..." Norgark started closing his eyes with a smile. "...The head of the village offered us these for free!" Nargyn gave a yelp interrupting Norgark, ruining his expression of pride, making his palm hit his face.

From the basket, she holds out the item wrapped in shiny paper before Arkaantho. His eyes darts from the item and to her. She holds his hands and then gives it to him.

"What is this?" He asks.

"Open it," she replies with a smile shifting nearer to him.

With his long sharp nail, the papers tear revealing a half plated-armour with red gold stripes at the shoulder running down across the chest with a black sword.

He runs his finger over it feeling the strong metal. It was ebony, black as the starless night sky fashioned with ruby red stripes.

"Do you like it?" She asks, her violet eyes twinkled in anticipation.

Arkaantho losses himself in her eyes for a moment and recovers by clearing his throat. "It is... fine... nice... very nice choice."

He says nodding.

Her grin widens at the compliment and she him with her hands.

"Okay, just let me try to wear it. I can't do so if you stick with me like that," said Arkaantho struggling to find the gentlest way to push her off him.

He undid his normal black armour and puts it in a shadow where it disappears. He notices Nargyn blush at his furry torso. He turns back and rushes to put on his new gear.

"Wow, it really is a nice choice well-done sister!" Norgark pats Nargyn on the back who looked at Arkaantho with jaws dropped and cheeks red, completely ignoring Norgark. "Look at him, he looks like a boss now!"

Arkaantho observes his new armour and sword with interest, a smile would almost break on his face if his gaze didn't fall on Nargyn.

He approaches Nargyn and placed his hand on her shoulder, "Thank you. Both of you."

The people rewarded them with warm, delicious feast that night. As the head of the village hosted it large pots of chicken stew

and salads of combined fruits and salads were distributed to the whole village. The twins were like animals having several plates and still wanted to continue. Arkaantho found the meal also well that night it was better than the tribe people's he had recently.

After having their fill the twins and Arkaantho retreated to their chambers. Arkaantho sat on a chair in his own room, illuminated with a candle and read the book while suddenly Nargyn's voice was in his head calling him. The voice seemed somewhat calm and happy. Reluctantly, he closed the book and climbed upstairs to her room.

It was the first time he explored her room. Unlike his and Norgark's the room was somewhat cozy, with green coloured walls, few candles held above a small dresser which lit the whole room into orange and a twin bed with bedsheets made of wool with poufy pillows. Aside from what can be caught by eyes, there was a pleasant scent in the room that sent light shockwaves in his mind.

Arkaantho opened the door and found her fixing her hair. She turned to him and nodded to come in.

"Why did you call me?" He asked as he closed the door behind him and watched as she finished combing her hair

transforming it into curly ends to smooth straight lines of blue.

She got up and sat on the end of the bed and smile as she looked at him. "I didn't call you."

Arkaantho narrowed his eyes. She looked down for some time then tapped on the bed beside her, motioning him to sit.

"I... was just thinking about you," She turned to him, putting her right leg on the bed turning towards him.

"Really?" said Arkaantho. "And why would you be thinking about me?"

"Well, isn't it obvious for very good friends to think of one another?" She said as her

eyes bore into his with her finger twirling her hair.

"I suppose so," Arkaantho his eyes darted from her clothes and to her eyes. She wasn't wearing any armour just the dark green gown. "Since you don't need me for anything... I have a book to read and you need rest for tomorrow's journey."

Her smile faded as soon as he got up, she quickly caught his hand, "W-wait... I do need you."

Arkaantho sighed and sat beside her again. She looked at him for a while. Noticing, Arkaantho widened his eyes to make her continue her reason for bringing him.

"Well... you know... I just want to say that you are a really good friend. If someone else was in your shoes than we would've been a lost cause way before all this." Her eyes slowly drifted to the window. The moonlight that passed through it made the light of the candle dim.

"I am grateful your appreciation," said Arkaantho as he watched her hair float on her body seamlessly, giving away a warm pleasant scent.

Before he could notice, he felt her warm hand slowly touched his. She smiled again as her eyes turned to his. "Such cold hands you have."

Arkaantho tried to move his hand away but he couldn't. "Thank you for taking us away from that valley. Because of you, we have the chance to see out uncle again.

"... And..." She gradually shifts closer to him.

"... Because of you, my brother is still alive and also because of you, we... I had so much fun today."

Arkaantho watches her, his mind seemed to be empty for words. Her dark violet eyes were ever absorbing.

Her smile widens as she drew closer, "You are a very gentle wolf." With that, her lips touches his muzzle. Before he could even realize, she slid her hand on the back of his

head and pulled him towards her, placing her other hand on his shoulder.

He was unable to move, her feelings washed into his mind like current flowing downstream. After a moment he found out that his armour was undone as her warm hands brushed against the fur of his cold body, sliding down as she continued the kiss. By then, she was on top of him as Arkaantho laid on the bed.

Finally mustering his strength in both his mind and body, he grabbed her shoulders and pulled her off him and sat up. When Nargyn tried to touch his shoulder his red glare stopped her midway.

"So this was your purpose for bringing me here," said Arkaantho, his red eyes slowly dimming.

Nargyn sat still with her hands on her lap, she gave him a glance then kept staring at the floor.

"Why would you do this?" Arkaantho asked.

She remained silent, lips twitching her face before was lit up with excitement, now drowned in sadness and regret as he could feel her in his mind.

"Why?" Arkaantho insisted.

"Because I love you!" Nargyn snapped as tears flew from her eyes to his face as she ragingly turned to him. "I just wanted, not

to just tell you, but show you how much I feel for you! Is that so bad?!" An uncontrollable stream broke loose.

Arkaantho watches her silently. She covers her face and even through the crevices of her fingers the drops managed to reach the floor.

Arkaantho got up and wears his armour, "If you are that desperate for love then as a very good friend I will suggest you..."

"There is no one else like you except you!" She broke him off. Her eyes were sunken as she wiped her face and kept staring at the window.

"You're too perfect, even for a man-beast. I have seen what you would do for us, for

"me!" said Nargyn her voice breaking by the minute.

"You've only seen what I can do, but not what I feel," Arkaantho replied, his voice took a cold turn.

"I know what you feel," she replied back.

"And what is it that I exactly feel right now?" Arkaantho asked.

For a moment she remained silent, then turned around with a slightly opened mouth with a questioning look on her face.

"Exactly..." Arkaantho said as he closes his eyes. "... Nothing. Nor for you neither for anyone."

"Why?!" She cried as she got up and grabbed Arkaantho by the collar of his armour.

"Because there is nothing to be felt," he replied.

"Back then, I saw so much pain in you I thought if I was able to take it all away by comforting you..."

Arkaantho removed her hands,

interrupting her, "Comfort me? Sorry to say this now but I'm not the romantic type."

"Is it because we're different?" She asked her eyes filling with tears ready to burst at any moment.

"No, because it's because I don't have any feelings for you," He turned around and started to walk towards the door.

"Why are you doing this? Why would you deny me?" Her voice broke as the flow of tears completely soaked her face.

"You tried to make love with the wrong person. I am a shadow, hollow and dark as that figure on the ground beneath your feet. Searching feelings and happiness in there will only fill you up with more of the contrary." As he said he opened the door, walked out and closed it behind him.

She started sobbing loudly as soon as the door shut. He walked down the stairs and saw Norgark coming up.

"Oh man, is she at it again? Doesn't she know her stupid thoughts like these gives me nightmares?" He asked Arkaantho rhetorically as he climbs up and enters Nargyn's room. Arkaantho returns to his room, closes the book that he had left open before and walked out of the house.

As the light of dawn shone on his closed eyes, his meditation broke. Upon opening, he saw Nargyn sitting on a stone several feet ahead of him. She looked at him with curious eyes and a grin as if nothing happened last night.

“What are you doing here?” He asked.

“What else... looking at you”, She said softly. “How could you just sit there like a statue for hours?”

He took cleared his throat, “It’s called meditation, and I doubt you’ve heard of it.”

“I did once...” she said shaking her legs and combing her brown hair with her hand.

“How long have you been here?” He asked as the thought of her words popped up in his mind.

“Well, four hours and maybe half-an-hour more.” She said as she stands up, looking at the tree-top.

“You... didn’t sleep?” He asked.

“No. Sometimes I feel like watching the glittering the stars in the night sky”, she said as she looked up then at him.

“Sleeping is a waste of beautiful time.”

“Well, speaking of wasting time, we should leave when you’re ready. Go have some breakfast and wake up Norgark,” said he as he stands up.

She looked at him for a second then walked to the old man’s house. He looked at her, *"What is with that woman? Why would she be sitting here for four hours?"* The sheer thought of her sudden peaceful behavior towards him perplexed him.

Walking around, he could see the vast orange sands of Egypt on the horizon. It

would take at least two days to reach the city, as the ground underneath his feet is the sands of the savanna. A gentle breeze blew past him. It was warm and dry, as few sand grains got stuck in his pitch-black fur. He brushed the sands off his fur sweeping his hand and walked to a nearby store.

The seller of the store was delighted to see his face as he saved the people from the terror of the shapeshifter. So, he handed Arkaantho the essential supplies for the journey through the desert, free of cost.

As he took five liters of water in a jar, a tent on his back, few lanterns and steel bowls with mugs and a couple of shawls with dry

woods, Nargyn exited the old man's house with half-sleeping Norgark who waved after them along with few people when they set out into the desert.

"Wait a minute!" She said as she frowned at him, "You didn't have breakfast!" Her brows shot up.

Arkaantho turned to her, "I don't have to." "But..." She started but was cut off by Arkaantho. "I rarely get hungry," He said. "How foolish of me, I was so excited about the delicious foods of the old man I also forgot about you," She said hitting her forehead with her palm.

They sat up a camp under a huge bending rock which looked like a huge snail's head,

sticking out of the sands. It was night, the place was as now as cold as it was hot in daylight. The sands quickly cooled like wet earth near the river. Nargyn kept her shawl on as she poked the bonfire with a stick and Norgark was sleeping over a rock, his body on top but his head was on the sand.

"Ugh, the desert has always riddled me with its sudden change in temperature," She complained as the fire was dimming out for the wind, piling more wood to sustain it.

"What's wrong with him?" Arkaantho asked pointing at Norgark who oddly laid on the stone.

"Oh," She starts with a sigh of annoyance,
"It his new power called desert sickness."

Arkaantho looked at him and nodded, her funny statement made sense as saliva drooled from Norgark's open mouth. He climbed the top of a huge rock formation.

"We may have a sandstorm approaching," Arkaantho said as he views the distance with narrow eyes.

She sighed in reply, "Great."

As he looked back the way they came, they have walked a long distance in such time as the horizon around him were only sands.

The moon was at its peak, lighting the daylight orange sands with teal with its

blue light. "I will be here if you need me."

He said to Nargyn, sitting cross-legged.

"I always need you." Her voice was heard in his mind, which remind him about last night. He cleared his throat and closed his eyes.

Suddenly, flashes of a person dressed in full armour appeared in his mind. It wasn't the dark lord as the helmet was fully covered and the armour seemed like the colour of sand with few thin crevices on it. He had a cape behind him which was made of sand, and in his hand, was a weapon which seemed like a saber, from where sand grains dripped from it. He could feel his voice calling out to him as he

approached from a great distance. Then with a shock, his meditation broke.

His consciousness jump-started as he clutched his head which throbbed like some unseen hand was put inside his skull and it kept squeezing the brain. His ears went numb as it drummed violently. It was still midnight, only the moon was more on the right. A hand touched his shoulder which was quickly removed as he turned to find out it was Nargyn's.

“What happened?” She asked the wolf who grunted in immense pain. As he turned, the pain bounced off, leaving his grimaced face into a perplexed one

“You were at panic a while ago.” She said her eyebrows knitted.

“Panic?” He asked perplexed.

She put her hands on his shoulder, “What happened, was it a nightmare?”

He frowned, “No one dreams during meditation!”

“Then?” She asked, her eyes seemed worried.

He gently removed her arms from his shoulder, “I... I don’t know.”

She sat beside him, “I have seen it too.”

He looked at her, narrowing his eyes.

“How?”

She looked at him with a small smile, “Because we’re connected.”

“Then it must’ve seen you too.” He said gritting his teeth, as his fist smacked the rock bed creating a small hole.

“It’s alright, as long as we’re together no one can harm us.” She said touching his hands which bore the feeling like she needed the reassurance more than him.

The feelings floating into his mind from her own created a surprising reassurance that with his shadow manipulation and her mind attack and Norgark, the sand armoured person might have a less chance of beating them.

“You should go and rest,” Arkaantho said directing his gaze away from hers.

“I can stay up it's...” She was cut off by him as he placed his hand on her shoulder.

“You’re not like me, do as I ask. I will be here looking out,” He said softly.

Nodding, she got up and slid down the mountain.

As the watchful night passed and a hot sunny day approached, their trek started as well packing everything and moving towards the East.

After long five hours of stepping on the hot sand bed and drinking from cactus, Nargyn stumbled upon on what seemed like a broken part of a wall. Her ankle was scratched by the rocky edge, although the

skin was damaged and no bleeding occurred. Norgark walked to the other broken parts and started to inspect those. Arkaantho picked up the heavy stone and observed it. The rocky piece was undoubtedly a piece of a fortress wall as the opposite side seemed to be designed like so.

As he walked around to search for more, his assumption resulted correct as more of the pieces were unburied from the hot sands. Out of all of them, he found a helmet of bronze and iron, which had the designs of a hawk with two long bent rods on its head covered with feathers. Aside from the

fragile and withered state, the helmet seemed to be a glorious piece of beauty.

He searched for more, but those were the last of the forgotten history of the mysterious fortress that was here.

Suddenly the sands beneath them rose and circled them. It wasn't a sandstorm but it was as if the sand was moving on its own.

"Arkaantho", Nargyn said as she clasped her head with her hands. "There is someone coming."

He turned to her, her face frowned as she tried to concentrate. "What is it?"

"I... I don't understand", she said, "I can feel it". She turned to her left, "There straight ahead, his mind... it's filled with the

memories of destruction.” She wailed but it the sound of rushing sands reduced it to a whisper.

When he turned to her point, in the dense sandstorm a silhouette walked slowly towards them.

Arkaantho thought back, it was exactly like the vision in his meditation. “Him?”

Nargyn did not reply but her eyes were wide as she stared at the figure. “So much destruction...”

Every step he took, there was a clanking noise of metal, even if there were none. Norgark rushed beside Arkaantho with his floating large metal blades ready to strike, keeping Nargyn behind them.

"What the heck is he? Some sort of black knight of the old or something?" Norgark commented, his voice was heavy. The way his mouth was curled as if he was ready to stop and swallow a vomit if it comes.

After a breath-stopping minute, the sand faded away giving out the paled sanded figure which stood before them with a sand dripping sword held on his right hand.

"I see." His voice was intimidating behind the fully shrouded helmet.

Arkaantho took his stance, he unsheathed the sword and on his left Norgark covering his body fully with the remaining metal

debris. Nargyn dashed to his side, here wide eye gaze was now furrowed.

“You!” He pointed the sword at him. “The traitor of our master! Do you really think you can resist your inevitable desolation with only that?!”

“What do you mean, ‘our master’?” Arkaantho said as he strengthened the grip on the handle.

“My, my, betraying him and even convinced yourself that he doesn’t exist to you anymore?!” He brought the sword to his side, his stance showed that he would charge any moment.

“What are you even blabbering about?” Arkaantho said, “I don’t even know you.”

“You of all the pathetic kind in this dreaded world should know who we are, because...”

He was cut off as he grunted and knelt, wrapping the fingers around his helmet.

Arkaantho turned to see Nargyn, her gaze was much darker than before.

With a grunt, he stood up, “Mind mistress!”

He laughed as he put his index finger up and swayed it. “It won’t work well on me anymore.” He said while tapping the helmet with the finger. “Now stand still to meet the fate of my disintegration!”

Without hesitation, Arkaantho charged the sword thrust at him while Norgark sent a barrage of metal blades.

He took a step behind, then parried it with his sword, which surprisingly did not produce the clanking sound. The whistling blades turns to dust in the air by his gaze.

Arkaantho stood surprised when the sword quickly crumbled into dust.

The armoured man laughed as he watched Arkaantho's shot up eyes.

He didn't waste any time as he quickly landed a kick on the knee and swung a back-fist on the helm.

The man wasn't blown away which Arkaantho thought he would but staggering a step back, he continued swinging his sand sword at him.

While Arkaantho dodged, Nargyn tried to invade his mind by placing her index fingers on the sides of her forehead, pumping more power and focus.

As he kept on swinging at Arkaantho, suddenly he clutched his head, resisting her influence over him.

“Pathetic mortal!” He planted the sword into the ground and put his hand in the air.

The sand around her swirled and instantly surrounded her in a giant ball.

Dashing past Arkaantho, Norgark charged him with his shoulder sending their adversary few feet back.

Arkaantho joined but he jumped back as a line of sand whipped around missing him

but hit Norgark hard shattering his armour.

Arkaantho looked at the ball, but she reassured him that she was unharmed, until a large spear-shaped sand pierced through the ball.

“Nargyn!” He cried out, but was reassured again that the spear missed.

“Ha! There goes your precious mind mistress. Now!” The armoured man waved his hands in the air forming a pattern of sand which trailed his gauntlets.

A numerous sand spears rose from the sand and all at once flew towards him.

Arkaantho’s pupils took a triangle shape, and five shadows rose from his own as

they rushed ahead to kicking and punching their way through the number of spears. He grabbed two spears and lunged at him. The man threw another spear aimed at his chest which was deflected by a kick from his shadow.

With a cry, he drove the spears straight at the base of the neck only to find out that the spears turned to sand at contact.

The man was about to retaliate but before he could, Norgark grinded the broken metal in to tiny and covered him with it.

The man was stuck midway then Arkaantho's shadows continued grabbing the leg and the other shadow to swipe its foot across the man's, while Arkaantho

swirled him above the air throwing him on the ground. The shadows continued their assault on him while Arkaantho ordered the other shadow to pick up the weapon.

Before it could grasp the handle, the sword uprooted itself from the ground and flew towards its master.

Norgark's strategy worked effectively as the metal dust on the man's body allowed him to crush him. The metal gave out clanking sound. The man's eyes glowed behind the visor as Norgark was being pulled towards him like a metal towards a magnet towards the pointed sword. Arkaantho sensed his intentions and sends his shadows. But the shadows abnormal

speed wasn't fast enough as Norgark floated towards the sword and being impaled on it.

"No!" Arkaantho cried. Enraged, he joined the charge with his shadows against the man.

The man laughed as he threw away the body by a swing of his sword and trapped Arkaantho shadows into a huge sandboxes. The sword chimed with power and he swiped it onto Arkaantho which he barely dodged.

The shadows quickly ran through the boxes, as they dematerialized and to the man.

Arkaantho kicked the man's chest, sending him towards them.

"This is bothering!" He cried, as he landed, planting the sword into the sand bed again.

In split seconds, five more of the man in sands appeared behind him and blocked the shadows attacks.

He pulled up the sword and charged at him while his shadows were busy fighting the sand clones.

With a loud sharp cry from behind Arkaantho, the man clutched his head and grunted. Arkaantho turned to his right, to see Nargyn, her hair floated above her head, not by the wind but the force of her

mind focused onto him as a line of blood
paints her from nose to mouth.

With a fierce cry, he recovered sending
Nargyn flying with a wave from his hand,
but she got up and continued.

“Enough!” He cried, as he left his sword on
the air which now hovered above the sand.

The sand clones turned to dust and
Arkaantho’s the shadows rushed to him.

The man floated above the ground, waving
his hands as the sand shifted around them.

Arkaantho charged at him, just when he
and his shadows were only a hairbreadth
away to with their nails aimed at his neck
and his head from both sides, a sand wall
formed around him and blew away the

phantoms and Arkaantho several feet away. A whip of sand tied Nargyn's foot pulled her up into the air and slammed her on the ground.

“Arkaantho! I have been playing with you all this time but no more!” He yelled. He started chanting in a different language as he spread his arms while tons of sands floated around him.

He looked at Arkaantho, then he curled his hands nearer to him and then spread them out in a flash. The sands around him went off him like small pebbles.

Instantly, Nargyn appeared in front of Arkaantho and stood in front of him,

becoming a shield for him for the sand salvo.

The sand pebbles pierced through her body and made it to his. It wasn't long enough till Arkaantho understood that she saved him, yet again.

Before a moment could pass, her body struck the ground like a puppet was cut off from the strings that held it.

Arkaantho eyes were widened as blood dripped from numerous holes created on her body.

The man chuckled, "Ha, how pathetic", he gestured his hands straight and Arkaantho went back flying. He laid motionless on the

ground, shocked as if his body was suppressed from the inside.

“The sand burst was designed to immobilize you, I am surprised that it surpassed my expectations and took out the most annoying part,” He continued as he walked steadily to her.

When he approached her, he held up his sword, “Now, time for you to die mind mistress, ever slowly,” he whispered as he dropped the sword, which cut through her body just as how it cut through the sandy ground.

Arkaantho couldn’t do anything but to see as he picked up the sword and approaching his next prey. The dying stare

from her, pierced through his soul and he could feel the mental connection between them was weakening quickly.

Arkaantho felt a flood of rage wash over him. As the body struck the ground, the surge of rage in his mind and body became heavier, more hateful, and pulsating. The rage, as dense and strong as the high tides of the ocean washed him over and for the first time, he felt a sharp pain in his mind as the connection between them broke.

As he gritted his teeth, clenching his fist so hard that the long nails pierced into his palms and black blood poured out. Arkaantho, despite the sands inside him, looked up to face him. His eyes were

completely black. Their colour so dark as if they blended with his fur. The sun was being blocked out. A strange black sphere appearing out of nowhere as if an eclipse was taking place but it grew till half of the complete circle. With a roar, the sands inside binding him was nothing more than a part of him as he stood up effortlessly a huge aura of black rippled around him.

The man was frozen on his tracks.

The daylight slowly faded, with a fierce roar, Arkaantho charged at the man. As he lunged, leaving trails of black behind him, in his hands two black sickles appeared into existence.

The man put up his sword as he chuckled at the approaching pitch black wolf in defense. As the sickles and the sword surprisingly clashed producing a loud clank, he gasped.

Before he could recover, Arkaantho kicked the sword up and slashed the neck.

Red blood gushed out as he staggered back.

He kicked Arkaantho on the chest before he could land, sending him flying while using his sands to seal the wound.

Arkaantho threw his sickle aiming at the sand helmet, but he dodged it by tilting his head.

The sickled passed after him and didn't go far while Arkaantho suddenly appeared in

the sickle's place and swung hard right across his shoulder, through the extremely rigid sand armour.

The right arm was completely severed as blood showered Arkaantho's face and body red.

The man groaned, taken by surprise he hit the ground, desperately crawling forward to escape his inevitable fate.

The sword flew to its master's aid. He got up and started swing at him, as the sands seals his wound and Arkaantho movement by binding his limbs.

As he readied the sand sword for the blow, Arkaantho's aura around him goes denser. His eyes went from pitch black to complete

red and the sword's edge made contact with his head but it did not cut.

The man gasped, mesmerized by Arkaantho's power to resist his sword's power of disintegration. As he tried to cut through Arkaantho's head by swinging at him again, the sword broke like glass. The man staggered back in awe as the sand binding Arkaantho's limbs went black and dissipated in the air.

“Impossible... I am the first knight of the Void kingdom! I will never be defeated by you!” He cried as he waves his hand. The sand forms a rippling cube. “But if I die I will take you down with...” Before he could finish, Arkaantho blinked behind him and

stabbed his sickle through the chest piercing through the sand armour as if the sand plates were mere leaves. He held the sickle in the place as he picked him off the ground and ran the other sickle through the neck.

As the blade cuts through the last bit of the flesh of his neck, splitting the head from the body, it hits the ground and so did the sand cube.

The black sphere faded covering the sun into nothingness and light shone upon the land once again.

Arkaantho aspect lightens. His dark aura and the redness of his pupils changed back to normal, the sickles vanished, so did the

body of the knight into tiny sand grains which now lie as part of the desert.

Several feet away, Nargyn laid on the sand bed unconscious while on the other side Norgark. Arkaantho approached her and saw that she was bleeding from all over her body but her injury was the most sever on her abdomen. Her passing out due to the high loss of blood was the definite reason for her to be mentally separated from Arkaantho.

He put her down under the shade of a large tree on the edge of the desert, bandaged her with as much cloth from the tent then ran off to check on Norgark. As he reached him, he could see through the

long crevice through his torso. There was no way he could be saved as the blade pierced through his chest destroying every organ there was. His eyes were lightless with lifeless expression. Arkaantho closed his eyes and brought him near the tree where Nargyn laid and started digging the ground.

It has been hours since he saw the small green bushes with sand rather than just mountains of sand. As he sat next to her, he looked at the horizon at the pyramids which seemed like the length of his forefinger from that distance. Still one more day of the journey ahead.

By the time Nargyn awake, it was already dusk and Arkaantho felt a tingling sensation in his mind as he understood that it was her connection with him reappeared. Ignoring to turn around, he was roasting a furless hare on a stick over a small fire.

“How are you feeling?” Arkaantho asked her while he kept turning the hare as the meat sizzles on the fire.

She quietly gasped as Arkaantho asked without even turning around.

“H-How did you... never mind. I’m kind of... Agh, my head still hurts!” She clasped her head with her hands hissing.

He turned around to the girl and handed her a bowl of brown liquid.

She looked at him in confusion. “What’s this for?”

“Remedy for the pain. Bile of hare with a crushed heart.” Arkaantho replied.

He face swollen as he held her lips closed with her hand then swallowed.

Arkaantho’s brow shot up.

By the time she recovered, “Yuck! And you expect me to drink it up like a nice soup?!”

“Fine. Then die of the pain.” He turned and was about to pour the liquid on the ground.

“W-Wait!” Nargyn exclaimed with shooting her hands forward to quickly stop him. “...I will drink it.”

Arkaantho kept looking at her as he struggles to swallow the strong pungent smelling juice.

“What’s with that face? It tastes just like mint leaves.” He said as he took the bowl, wiped the hollow surface with a leaf and placed the roasted hare.

After swallowing with all her might, she gave a groan clutching her belly as he laid on the ground. “Keep... telling... that... to... yo... urselv.”

“Stop acting like a child.” Arkaantho placed the roasted hare in front of her and cleared his throat.

As soon as her eyelids lifted up just enough to catch the sight of a delicious hare, she quickly jumped up with a gasp. Her face looked as if she never drank the juice.

She quickly tore pieces from it with both of her hands and moaned stuffing her mouth and leaning back on the tree.

Arkaantho gave a sigh as to her childish act, nothing more meat than she could swallow. “Be careful, the bones may choke you to death.”

She looked at him as if pulled from a dream. She swallowed quickly and threw

her hands around his neck and tangled as tightly as she could. "Thank you!"

He quickly pulled her off him, "Just finish eating!"

Detaching, she looked at him blankly.

So did Arkaantho, waiting for something unexpected to burst out again from her.

Suddenly, she gave a mile-wide smile and continued with the dinner.

She turned to him, "Won't you have some?"

Arkaantho put up his hand, "I'm not hungry."

Her eyes frowned. She looked around, "Wait, w-where is Norgark?!"

Arkaantho looked down apologetically.

She stood up and her hands tightly gripped

his shoulder tears slowly filling her eyes,
"Where is my brother!?"

After a moment, he placed his hands over hers, removes them and points at the mound on the other side of the tree.

Immediately, she rushes to it and stumbled. She fell hard making a loud rustle on the dead leaves as her wailing started to echo throughout the whole land.

Arkaantho watched her and that sight made him reminisce about Struff, how he wept before his sister's gave was just as similar as how Nargyn did before Norgark's. For the first time, her sorrow penetrated his mind and he started to feel the same for her, but it didn't last long

inside him as it came and went like a mere moment.

After a while, he got up and sat near Nargyn. "I'm sorry, I wasn't able to protect your brother."

She nodded and covered her face with her palms as she sobbed softly.

"You should rest or else your body will have a bad reaction to that juice that you drank," said he while he watched her trying to fight back the sorrow.

After a while, he placed his hand on her head and pulled it towards his chest. She wrapped her arms around his body and started sobbing again. He softly brushed her hair until she calmed down.

He pulled her off him and lifted her face cupping her cheeks to meet her eyes, “I will be back. After finishing, try to sleep or else that juice will have a bad reaction to the meat you will have eaten.”

She nodded in reply as she tried to wipe the face that was drowned in tears.

As he came back with a bowl of water, Nargyn was already asleep beside the mound. He kept the bowl beside her, put out the fire and sat as he concentrates in his meditation.

Arkaantho opens his eyes at first light and turned only to see Nargyn wasn’t beside the tree. He stood up and checked his

surroundings until his eyes set upon her several steps away.

He walked up to her and saw she was sitting on a giant rock. He climbed up, “What are you doing here?”

She slowly turned until she could see him from the corner of her eyes, “I am praying to Anubis for my brother’s safe passage.”

“Anubis?” Arkaantho asked. “Who is that?”
“Oh, don’t you know?” She turned around standing up. “A fellow Egyptian back in the village told us that he is the god that takes care of the ones in the afterlife. He is the god of death.”

“Interesting,” Arkaantho said, “And so praying to him does what exactly?”

“I pray to him so that he may help him pass through the judgment of deeds to the garden of eternal happiness.” She said giving him a half-curious look.

He cupped his lower muzzle, “Did the god listen to your prayers?”

“I don’t know, but the guy said if the prayer was from a sincere heart Anubis would surely listen to me.” She said as she turned to the horizon.

“Alright, as soon as you’re done with your prayer we are setting out. Egypt is nearby.”

Arkaantho said pointing at the pyramids.

“I’m done. Let’s go Arkaantho.” She said with a nod and a smile appears as soon as she says his name.

Arkaantho gave her an exasperated look before climbing down the rock.

After a torridly hot day of walking, they finally stop at the huge gate of Memphis, the main city of Egypt.

The gates, they were beautifully designed with masterwork sculptures as two bodies of gods were carved beside the doors, each holding a scepter with their eyes staring ahead.

There were two guards wearing glowing white shirts which extended till their knees and fasted at the waist. They wore a brown jackal's mask. They stood motionless before the gates each of them

holding with a spear in one hand and shield on the other.

“Wow, would you look at that. They really did some nice work on the gate!” Nargyn chuckled.

“Have you been here before?” Arkaantho asked slightly surprised.

“When I was eight.” She releases a deep sigh as they both walked into the golden city. “It’s been twelve years since I came here.”

Her expression quickly sunken, “I wish Norgark was also here.”

From the looks of it, this wasn’t what Arkaantho expected.

“This city, it wasn’t supposed to be filled with these low-life humans” He thought in his mind. *“Where are the gods, where is Ra?”*

His eyes quickly shot up at the realization that Nargyn can read thoughts. He looked at here as normally as possible and caught her eyes. She looked at him for a moment with her brows slightly furrowed then pointed past him.

“Hey, I’ve... never seen that before!” She points at the direction of the golden peak of the largest pyramid. “Oh wait, no I did see it before.” She lets out a small chuckle.

She holds his hand, "Come, I will show you to my uncle's house!" And leads him deeper into the city.

It was just like the other place he has been, only this time the houses were tall and some were the size of a quarter of hill made of stones and woods. Just like villages, human people were walking here and there. Some carrying bundles of rags and others were just standing around talking to each other. The children were running around boisterously and few stood near alleyways, alone while few beggars sat with their backs against the walls with their plates on the ground.

After several steps, they were stopped by a man dressed in bright tunic from neck to toe and a golden necklace around his neck with a pale odd-looking man behind him.

“Greetings, I am the royal Vizier known to this holy city as Khamnum.” He said bowing his head slightly.

Arkaantho looked at the man in silence.

He cleared his throat after a moment of silence passed by. “Would you please follow me, my majesty pharaoh Medankhemen wishes to speak with you.”

He looked at Nargyn who was standing beside him and his eyes was starting to widen.

“Nargyn?” His jaw fell.

“Huh, wait you’re...” She was stopped by a sudden hug from the vizier. “My niece!” Arkaantho took a step back, as he watched them rejoicing their reunion.

“Uncle, what a surprise! You are the pharaoh’s vizier!” She exclaimed.

“Yes, my dear! My dream was finally made true!” His lighted expression slowly dimmed as he came to realize about Norgark.

“Where is my nephew Norgark?” He asked. Nargyn’s laughter died away almost instantly, “Uncle, can I tell you later about him?”

The vizier laughed again, “Of course my dearest! I see you have a complaint against him as usual.”

His eyes fell on the black wolf.

“Oh, he is my... friend.” Nargyn smiled as she looked at him.

“Him?” The vizier asked. Nargyn nodded in reply.

Arkaantho regarded the vizier with a nod.

“It is a pleasure to meet you, royal vizier.”

He turned to Nargyn without replying to Arkaantho, “Your friend?”

He approached Arkaantho and patted him on the back, “It really is a pleasure to meet my niece’s friend. But sorry to say that the pharaoh is waiting for you and its best not

to keep him waiting." The vizier led the two
into the grand pyramid.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GATEWAY

The hieroglyphics on the huge pillars leading to the entrance shows some kind of story with multifarious species and gods doing something that is beyond Arkaantho's knowledge. Same as the city's entrance, two jackal-headed guards stood motionless arm length away on either side of the gate.

As the Vizier approached, the guards quickly opened the gate with their hands at a surprising synchronization without compromising their position and bowed.

In a flash, the two found themselves in a place which shed golden albedos from everywhere with teal carpets lined across the smooth golden floor leading to the main chamber.

The floor was so clean and smooth, that reflected his aspect itself. The carpet on his feet were soft as minuscule grass. From the golden ceiling hung a huge chandelier which seemed like a giant eye from below staring at the ones who walk under it that held the place alight with radiating candles.

The Vizier led them into the throne room as he unfolded the silk crimson curtains.

A man on a huge yellow throne was seated at the far end of the room raised with several steps and under the violet canopy with several maidens companied him with a golden platter of violet grapes and dancing in front of him. He was dressed in violet garment dressed in jewelry from top to bottom. The man smiles at the dancers which were short lived as his eyes came to rest upon the approaching black wolf.

“Your absolute divine! My eyes are blessed by your just semblance!” The vizier immediately knelt before him as he came to the bottom of the stairs followed by Nargyn.

But the king's focus was on Arkaantho. "You are in my holy realm, mortal." He said to Arkaantho, who was still standing, as he grabbed a bunch of grapes with one hand and held it above his mouth while with the other he gestured to him. "Kneel."

Arkaantho narrowed his eyes as he felt some mysterious force was trying to make him obey.

"Just forget you're pride for one second and do as he asks!" The vizier whispered which would've felt like a cry if he wasn't in front of the pharaoh.

Arkaantho gritted his teeth but kept his expression and posture natural as he tried not to kneel.

“What’s this trick, why do I feel like I owe my life to him? To this pathetic excuse of a pharaoh?”

Arkaantho hands balled into a fist as the force kept getting stronger by the moment.
“You’re not my pharaoh!” Arkaantho said with great difficulty.

The eyes of person in the chamber except the pharaoh’s, went wide with shock.

The pharaoh frowned at first looking at him over then let out a tiny smile. “Oh, then what brings your filthiness in my glamorous city?”

The force on him still growing. Arkaantho let out a small sigh, “My business is not your concern.” The answer made everyone

else in the room shudder with fear. Nargyn and the vizier continuously murmured to him, “Stop, just do what he says!”

“I see, you’re not even a human, just some furry dog who thinks the world is in your hands by speaking to me like that.” The pharaoh stands up from the throne his smile getting wider. “You’re in my palace, my city, before my presence and still you retain the audacity to say that it’s not my business?” He walked down the stairs. His feet being showered with kisses from his subjects and the two who kept bowing. Finally, he stood before him, few inches from Arkaantho’s face. “You’re not even a

god. Otherwise... things would've been different.”

Arkaantho found himself completely stoned on the spot. He could feel his limbs but cannot move them. He tried to speak but his tongue went numb.

The pharaoh turned. “Guards please take this unpleasant creature to the place...” He chuckles and looks at him from the corner of his eyes as he murmured loud enough for Arkaantho to hear as he is being dragged away by the guards, “Where he will regret his grave mistake.”

Arkaantho slowly opens his eyes and legs shoots at him with unusual speed sending

him flying through the bars he was locked in.

“Took some time for you to relieve yourself of my bind!” A large purple glowing figure with deformed shape spat as it spoke. Arkaantho’s flight was stopped by an invisible wall which electrocuted him the instant his body came in contact with it.

“If you’re wondering who I am, then try to remember about the man before who you didn’t, at least, kneel.” The figure traipses towards him, wraps his long fingers around his head and picked him up till the height of the figure’s own.

As a moonlight pierced through from what seemed like a mile-height ceiling, the

abnormal visage of the figure made Arkaantho's eyes wide.

His large eye covering the half of his face observes him while the mouth that opens sideways to speak, "Look at you. So frail, so small. What are you?" He stretches his elongated hand up to three feet long to observe the black wolf from afar and pulls him back near him again.

Arkaantho could barely struggle against him as the previous numbing effects are affecting him again.

The nails of the tightly gripped fingers digs into Arkaantho neck and head. He grumbles in pain but his body won't budge. "I thought your kind has been

extinct since several centuries from now. But no matter, at least you will share the same fate of those who ‘knew’ themselves to higher and mightier than me and was rectified later.” The figure hints at the laying bones and skulls below.

As the figure’s body strangely shifts, he caught a glimpse of red stone etched on his skin that shifts to it neck.

Arkaantho felt his eyes were going to close now and he figured out that the pharaoh uses the red stone to weaken him as the paralyzing effects increased when Arkaantho was only a few inches from it.

The fingers unwrapped and Arkaantho dropped to the ground with a loud thud.

“Well, at least from all the previous contenders you are a bit heavy.” The pharaoh turns around and walks to the door. The invisible barrier waved as he passes through it. “Oh, one more thing.” He stops near the door. “Please scream in your agony.” With that said he exits the rooms chortling as loud as he could.

Within several minutes, Arkaantho gained full control of his body. He stood up and examined the room he is in for any weak spots. The room was completely dark but Arkaantho’s eyesight allowed him to see through the darkness. It seemed more like a ritual chamber. The floor was half flooded with bones, the walls bore strange

paintings of offerings. The ceiling was the height of a mountain and far ahead was, what seemed like, a shrine. The unlit candles and accumulated dust on it appear to be unused. In that shrine, a statue hung by a thread swayed almost unnoticeably. Even though the room was deprived of air, it was surprising to see that the statue, which almost looked like the creature that subdued him in the barrier, started to swing more strongly if only that moved ever so slightly that even Arkaantho had to stare at it for moments to confirm it. Out of all the nugatory decorations in the room, only one puzzle was to be solved, bypassing the inviable shocking barrier

made by a small black stone engraved on the floor.

Arkaantho tried blinking to the other side, pushing through the barrier with all his strength, break through the ground but was rendered futile. The shock burnt through his flesh making smoke radiate from his body.

He sat, thinking other means to get out.

Then suddenly he could hear a voice in his mind. “Arkaantho! Arkaantho, I’m here!”

“Nargyn?!” He replied telepathically.

“Where are you?”

“I’ve found you! Wait, how come you’re so way down?” Nargyn said.

“You really want me to answer that?”
Arkaantho replied.

“Oh no!” She said. “If you’re there then how
will I...”

“Nargyn.” Arkaantho stopped her. “What is
the situation up there?”

“I... my uncle... he is being tortured to death
because he let you into the palace of the
pharaoh.” Even in her thought, Arkaantho
could hear her sobbing.

“But didn’t the vizier said that the pharaoh
wanted to see me?” Arkaantho asked.

“I’m sorry. I don’t know who else to turn to
except you!” Nargyn’s sobbing was getting
heavier.

“Calm down! You’re not letting me think straight. By your estimate how far am I below?” Arkaantho asked gritting his teeth.

“Ab... about half a pyramid? I don’t know for sure.” Nargyn said her voice half broken.

Arkaantho smacked his fist on the barrier resulting in being electrocuted again.

“What are you doing?” Nargyn cried in his mind.

“Just find some way to get me out of here!” Arkaantho yelled back. “I’m so sick of this.”

It has been two nights since he spoke to Nargyn. Arkaantho for the first time in all of his troubles he doesn’t have a solution.

He sat in the middle of the circle

meditating, waiting for the slightest bright idea to fabricate in his mind.

“Arkaantho!” Suddenly her voice jerked his eyes open.

“What? Nargyn, what’s wrong?” He stood up.

“We’re gonna get you out of here!” She said her voice bore excitement as she said those words.

“What? But, how...” Arkaantho was surprised.

“Just keep talking to me we’re almost there!” She cut him off mid-question.

“We...?” He frowned. “Who else is with you?”

A crack formed on the wall behind him. He whipped around to see a large spider web crack on the wall. “You might wanna stand back.” Her voice inside his mind slowly dissipated as Nargyn along a bunch of ragged-looking men broke through the wall with a loud bang sending bricks flying throughout the whole room.

As she walked into the room, the moonlight revealed her lips curving upwards with a twinkle in her eyes. Arkaantho looked at her with his jaw dropped and eyes wide.

She held out a hand and one of the men handed her a hammer which she struck on one of the rocks breaking it into two.

The field around Arkaantho gave a slight flash of blue and disappeared.

She approached the shocked wolf locking her eyes with her.

Arkaantho quickly recovered to his normal posture and nodded, “Well done.”

As soon as he finished, she threw herself at him, and pushed quick a gentle kiss on his muzzle and pulled apart, “I... really missed you.”

Arkaantho didn’t resist her this time. He let her grieve wash away on him for a while as he slid his hand around her and gently brushed her head as she connects her soft lips with his fuzzy muzzle and continued to kiss him.

The men behind, looked at them with wide eyes as they embraced each other for a moment. Finally, Arkaantho softly pushed her off him and his eyes moves to the gaping crowd behind her, "Who are they?"

She turned her head towards the baffled crowd then back at the wolf again. Her hand trailing his chest she smiles, "They are the rebel of my uncle." She murmurs as her other hand's fingers twirls in the think mane on the back of his neck, "They are here to help end the pharaoh's reign once and for all."

"First you draw as much as your rebel friend as you can then distract them near

the pyramid's entrance. One enough tension is created I will go to the chamber of the pharaoh and end him there."

Arkaantho says as he draws the pathway upon which the rebels will act on a path of sand.

"I will come with you." Nargyn touched his shoulder.

"No. I want you to lead the rebels and if possible try to make some of the guards kill each other." Arkaantho looked at the guards who near the entrance who were dozing off momentarily.

"H-How?" Nargyn asked perplexed.

"I have witnessed it myself. When you tell me something to do telepathically,

especially when my mind is not completely focused I... almost ended up doing it.”

Arkaantho nodded.

“Nargyn’s frowned then her eyebrows shot up, “Really!”

“Quiet down!” He whispered. “Yes. See those men?” He pointed at the sleeping ones in the courtyard. “Just focus hard on your command and they will do whatever you direct them.”

“Alright...” Her eyes crinkled with a smile, “Understood.”

Arkaantho contemplated her eyes for a moment, “Well, what are you waiting for?” “I just want to tell you something,” said Nargyn her eyes bore the look of concern.

"What is it?" Arkaantho asked.

"When we kissed..." She looked at his eyes and continued after a moment, "I... didn't feel you breathe."

Arkaantho's eyes narrowed, "What? Is that even a matter to be brought up now?"

"W-well... I just thought that something was wrong with you..." She tried to explain when she stopped as his finger forced her lips closed.

"If you worry about me one more time..." He drew closer to her, his red eyes glowing, "I will kill you." The soft threat made her shudder in fear.

She gave a nervous smile and ran off with the rebels, joining in their assault. Before

he went to back, he put a hand near his mouth and for a moment of observation he frowned on the results, "*She was right.*"

Abandoning the thought, Arkaantho went back into the ritual chamber while Nargyn and the rebels started chaos.

He broke down the lock of the door and climbed up the stairs.

Reaching the top, he came into a room that was three time the size of the one down below. It was illuminated with golden light and ahead was the pharaoh drinking a purple liquid.

Without a word of warning, Arkaantho blinked behind him and stabbed the sickle through him.

The blade pierced through his chest. “You dirty backstabber!” The pharaoh laughed as his aspect turned purple, the skin of his body shifting in a gross manner.

In retaliation, the pharaoh sent Arkaantho flying to the other end of the room by the fling of his abnormally longhand.

He pulled out the blade off him and threw it at Arkaantho but it disappeared before it flew few feet.

Arkaantho stood up, his body was already started to weaken. The red stone etched on the pharaoh’s chest bloomed ominously. “What’d you think?” He lets out a chuckle from behind the numerous teeth that

almost covered his face, “I’m not good at dying, pup!”

Arkaantho collapsed to his knees. His body was taut with rage but it won’t respond.

In a blink of an eye, the pharaoh grabbed him by the throat and pulled him up.

“What a pity. You did put up a fight but there is no point in kneeling now. You will die along with the rest of the scum...” He drew him closer to his face and the stench of his breath flooded Arkaantho’s face, “...

Like a dog!”

Just then, the door behind them slammed open as a group busted in. Nargyn entered and fired her arrow as soon as she saw the abomination. The arrow pierced through

the slick skin of his chest and the stone. It shattered like glass. The pharaoh was pushed front by the numerous spears that plunged into him.

Arkaantho laid on the ground, his strength steadily rose. Nargyn continued her rain of arrows, but the pharaoh was too strong for them. He grabbed all of the men with his tentacle-like arms and tore them apart like papers. He quickly recovered and started throwing the spears at Nargyn.

Arkaantho motioned her to retreat but she was busy attacking the pharaoh.

“Run! Nargyn get out of here!” Arkaantho shouted as he pushed the ground to stand but he barely could.

The pharaoh paused for a moment, “Oh, this will be fun.” He threw his tentacle hands like harpoons at Nargyn. She dodged and went to grab an arrow from the quiver only to find it empty.

She drew her sword and stood near Arkaantho. “Wh-What are you doing?” He cried again.

“I can’t just abandon you and let him kill you.” She yelled back.

The pharaoh chuckled, “What a pathetic relationship you both share. But, no matter I will send both of you to the afterlife and you can continue your squabbles there,”

With an inhuman speed, he grabbed

Nargyn by the throat and smacked her onto a wall.

She cried out in pain as the golden wall was being stained with red from Nargyn's head.

Arkaantho watched, petrified as the pharaoh drove his hand through her abdomen.

"Aw, such a waste!" He twisted his hand until Nargyn choked on her own blood.

"No, NO!" Arkaantho burst with rage as he pushed the ground and stood up. His appearance was starting to get darker than his usual self. His eyes glowed menacingly as the redness filled his eyes fully.

The pharaoh immediately jumped back and was in awe with a sudden change of Arkaantho aspect. A frightening aspect.

He growled as the body was completely covered with dark which seemed like a black aura that circled him in a liquid motion.

“Impossible! You’re not the god of death! You can’t be...!” Before the pharaoh could finish, Arkaantho’s hand pierced through his chest.

The pharaoh grabbed his hand, shocked by the speed he appeared before him. He coughed up blood and after seconds he found out that his chest was missing something, his heat which was held by

Arkaantho's hand behind him. He looked at Arkaantho's terrifying visage of red and black, and the light of his large eye left and the body collapsed on his hand.

He pulled the hand from his body, the slime of purple ooze dissipated around his hand as if there were boiled up.

He turned to Nargyn. She clutched her belly and gritted her teeth still struggling to live.

The dark aura vanished. He returned to his normal aspect and crouched near Nargyn who moaned as he picked up her head.

She could barely speak for the blood in her mouth. She watched Arkaantho as her palm brushed the fur of his face.

He held her hand on his face, “I’m sorry. I couldn’t repay you the debt I owed you for saving me back then.” His voice was gentle unlike normally.

“It’s nothing, don’t worry I... will be... fine. I... am not... going... to leave... you now... not...” She coughs with every word until Arkaantho placed his hand over her mouth to stop her.

“Thank you for all that you did for me, and sorry for treating you badly.” Arkaantho murmured.

She grabbed Arkaantho’s shoulder, “You’re thanking me for the kiss?” She cracked into a smile. “I... will... always... l-lo” Her hands

fell mid-sentence as she gave her final breath.

Arkaantho's jaw clenched, he ran his hands across her face and closed her eyelids.

Some of the men with a heavily bruised vizier walked through the broken door. He collapsed as soon as her body came into his view. He sat near her and kept weeping, saying the only thing over and over again, “Not my daughter!”

Arkaantho left him to mourn. Before he sat out with no clue as to how he will get to the real Egypt, he saw a scroll on the bed of the pharaoh. He opened the scroll. At

first, it was difficult to read the messy scribbles then all became clear.

FINALLY, I HAVE DECIPHERED THE CLUE OF THE DOOR TO THE GOD REALM! WHO WOULD'VE THOUGHT THAT THE JINN THAT I CONSUMED INTO MYSELF AND THE INNOCENT'S BLOOD WOULD DO THE TRICK? NOW THERE IS A NEW PROBLEM IN MY PALACE LEFT TO SOLVE. LET'S SEE IF I CAN CONSUME THAT DORMANT GOD IN THAT DOG. MAYBE THEN I WILL BE FULFILLED AS THE ONE TRUE GOD!

Along with the scroll, there was also a short note attached to it on a piece of paper which tells about the instruction as to how to perform the ritual to activate the door.

"The blood of the innocent?" Arkaantho's gaze dashed to his red hands stained with Nargyn's blood. He scrapped a flesh from the pharaoh's body. Before he turned to leave, the light from the reflection of the broken red stone caught his attention as it shone upon his eyes. He crouched near the shards and observed as the final pulsating red glow diminished on his hands. Without thinking further about it, he slipped the stones in his shadow and rushed out of the room in search for the gateway to the god realm. The rebels surprisingly emptied the whole pyramid off the soldiers. Each room he went through were either filled with bodies of

both the rebels and soldiers or empty. Arkaantho returned to the throne room, the only room left to search, after investigating all the other chambers thoroughly. He approaches the throne and inspects it. Running his fingers around all the hidden curves of the throne, his hands comes in contact with a round small switch. He pushes it and with a loud crackling noise, a large rectangular piece of the wall behind the throne shifted revealing a secret dark chamber only illuminated with the light from the throne room.

He walked into the chamber. Lighting a torch inside, he found a large oval shaped

mirror framed with gold and silver was attached to the wall. At the bottom was a cylinder of intricate symbols and arts.

By the instructions, he smeared the blood on both of his hands. First, he rubbed it on the cylinder in a clockwise motion then on the mirror in an anti-clockwise motion. He waited a few moments as nothing seemed to happen. After checking for anything out of place he noticed a bit of gap in the circle. Placing his thumb on it, the door magically burst into life.

It hummed at a steady frequency. The purplish white center kept moving in a random motion. First, it started as a size of

a head then eventually it covered the whole mirror.

As the mirror mystically boomed, he stood for a moment and thought about the feelings he had for Nargyn even if it was little. Being a mind-mistress, it was actually her who pumped those emotions of her inside him creating some sort of concern for her. Now that he thinks about it, it's completely unavailing because as much as he tries to recollect those feelings, there are none. The regret he had for not fulfilling the debt he owed her for saving his life are now empty. All that he could recollect is her name and her appearance.

Arkaantho looked at the mythical door for a while, the constant rotation of the strangely coloured door was enough to hypnotize a man at first sight. No wonder why the pharaoh had to consume a jinn for this. He grabbed the frame and walked into the door, losing his self in the groundless, endless place that carried him forward into a new world hidden among one.

EPILOGUE

"So, he finally made it, huh?" He, slams his fist on the arm of the black fiery throne as he gets up. The crystal black cape behind him ripples as the heavily armored figure walks down the little stairs, the hall booming by the sound of loud thuds made by every step he too while exiting..

He opens a door in the corridor and two less than seven years of age boys had their feet, hands and mouth wrapped with thorny chains, attached to the wall, starts to mumble with their eyes widen and bloodshot as soon as they see him. The chains jangled as they move, their desperate futile ways to break free of the

chains would only cause the thons to puncture deeper into the flesh. The boys cried behind their closed, bloody mouth. Tears, mixed with blood, showered the floor above they stood and formed a puddle which reflects their peril.

He starts laughing as soon as their bruised and bloody aspect falls into his view. "Yes, cry, scream, resist as much as you can for today is the day you will become much more than mere blood and muddy flesh." His voice is high, beaming with confidence he held his fist in the air posing frightening stance making the boys shriek out of fear.

He enjoys the view for a while then as he hold out an open palm upon which a big,

carved book materialize out of air and hover above.

With a look, the book opens and the pages kept turning madly and settles which seems to be at the middle part of the book.

With the other hand, he aims at the boys and suddenly the background shifts from the gloomy prison-like place to a gloomier, dark forest.

The boys, free of the chains make a run for it. He looks up and see them more limping rather than running.

"Ha! Where do you think you're going?" He spreads his hands while the book hovers before him, "I own this place!"

The boys stopped to see before them laid a dark forest where not even the sky's light can reach no further due to the tall canopy.

The only small place was lit blue was from the light of the eyes of the dark lord.

"Stop squirming like human children," He looks at the book and again the pages rushed, this time it went backwards. "Yes, perfect."

Instantly, two silvery eggs as big as till the waist of the boys appeared before them. Theirs limbs were spread out to the either side and stretched as far as possible. The pain was so much to bear, they were drained the strength even for screaming.

"Hmm, I don't like quiet like but it'll do," He moves his hands in a circular motion above the book. In response the eggs hatched and two humming glowing spheres of orange and blue rise up to the air slowly. The two spheres illuminated most of the place similar to two very small moons.

Momentarily, the chest of the boys burst open, their ribs thrown out, lungs, heart and other organs detached from the body and sunk into the swamp. As if by the command of the dark lord, the spheres moved into the organ's stead. For a moment everything seemed to have settled for silence, then with a loud whip sound, their

bodies transformed into orange and blue
threads reforming into a new aspect.

The dark lord laughed, as the screams of
the two boys become heavier and was
replaced by monstrous wailings. His eyes
glowed brightly by the success of his
inhuman transfiguration of the two
human boys. "Magnificent!"

-----THE END-----

318

